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General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

11th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 26 September 2012, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.15 p.m.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: I bring warm greetings from the people of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am privileged to address this body once again. I join with those who have gone before me in congratulating Mr. Vuk Jeremić on assuming the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. We find ourselves in challenging times. The work ahead of us during this session reflects those challenges. I am confident, however, that, under his able leadership, this Organization will continue its work to improve the quality of life for all members of our global community, in particular those who are most vulnerable.

Let me also take this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation the commendable leadership of his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, during the most recent session of the General Assembly.

I also recognize the unwavering dedication of our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. With his hand on the tiller, he continues to steer our Organization through the complex realities and challenges facing our world today towards our objectives. In particular, I would like to acknowledge with deep appreciation his personal commitment to the issue of climate change and the plight of the most vulnerable. We in Kiribati welcomed the Secretary-General to our country last year, during the first visit ever by anyone in his position to our part of the world. We were grateful for the opportunity to show him firsthand the challenges of living on the front lines of climate change.

In the President's opening statement yesterday (see A/67/PV.6), he reminded us that the core function of the Organization is the maintenance of peace and security. It is important that we all reflect on what we have done as individuals to achieve a more peaceful, secure and better world. We must ask ourselves if what we are doing is in the collective interest of all the peoples of this world or of just a select few. We must look at our efforts as leaders of this global family and ask ourselves if we are doing the right thing for our children and their children.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

I firmly believe that, with all the information available to us today, we should know exactly what needs to be done. We know what we have to do but, for whatever reason, we lack the courage, the fortitude and the vision to do it. We lack a sense of responsibility for each other. We are not willing to step out of our comfort zone and make the necessary sacrifices for the security and future of all members of our international community.

It is never too late to do the right thing. History shows many examples where global action has resulted in global good. We have managed to secure a relatively more peaceful world. We have been able to address some of the major injustices of the past. We have come together to face down those who seek to achieve their objectives through terrorist means. However, we must remain vigilant, as new and emerging forms of security threats and injustices are cropping up to threaten our global family.

This will be the seventh time I have had the honour to address the Assembly in my nine years as President of my country. Each time I have sought to convey the same message. Each time I have spoken of the real and existential threat to my nation. Each time I have reminded the Assembly of the need for urgent action to address climate change and sea level rise so as to ensure the long-term survival of nations like Kiribati.

I frequently find myself watching my grandchildren and wondering what sort of a future we shall be leaving them. For their sake, climate change is an issue that I will continue to talk about for as long as I have breath in my body. This is a critical issue for the survival of our people and for all of humanity. It remains the greatest moral challenge of our time.

Whether or not we are willing to acknowledge it, climate change and sea-level rise are the result of the unsustainable use of our planet's resources. Economic growth at all costs must not be our mantra, particularly when it is those who will benefit the least from this growth who will pay the ultimate price. The Earth is not ours to do with as we please. We are merely trustees for future generations, and we ignore this reality at their peril.

The Organization was founded on the fundamental principle of sovereign equality. Security issues affecting each of us must be given due recognition. We are grateful that the General Assembly agrees that climate change is a matter warranting the attention of the Security Council. I applaud the commitment of our Secretary-General to this particular security threat, but he needs the support of all nations to take the necessary action to address it.

We must step up our collective efforts to mitigate global greenhouse-gas emissions. We continue to urge major greenhouse-gas emitters to do their part. We also urge development partners to provide the appropriate level of resources and technology to enable us to deal with the current and future impacts of climate change and sea-level rise.

While we are taking adaptative measures to ensure that Kiribati remains habitable for as long as possible, we are also preparing for a future when our islands may no longer be able to sustain our population. We are looking to improve the skills of our people to a level where they will be able to compete for jobs in the international labour market. We want our people to have the option to migrate with dignity, should that be a necessary choice in the future, and all the science is telling us that that is a real possibility.

We note some positive progress made at the recent climate change talks in Bangkok, building on the decisions made in Durban last year. However, action has been too slow in coming. We inch along, when it is great strides that are needed. On those issues where we have consensus, we believe the international community must move to implement agreed action without delay, while we continue our discussions on those matters that remain contentious. If we wait for agreement on everything, then it is going to be a very long wait and a long process.

It should not come as a surprise that we are off-track on many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While other countries are focusing their resources on their efforts to meet the MDGs, we, the most vulnerable countries, continue to spend a disproportionate level of our limited resources fighting the onslaught of the rising seas and storm surges on our homes, livelihoods and public infrastructure. That is a costly exercise that we cannot afford. We continue to rely on the goodwill of our partners and members of our global community in that regard.

We are a nation of water. We are a very-large-ocean State. We believe that, given the right support, we can achieve sustainable development through the utilization of the available resources of our vast exclusive economic zone. We believe that, in so doing, we can reduce our reliance on development assistance. I also believe that we may even be able to do away with development assistance altogether, if we are provided with the support we need now to develop our capacity to harvest and process our own resources.

Fisheries remain a major economic resource for my country, providing between 40 and 50 per cent of our revenue. Our aspiration is to maximize returns from that resource, given the current rate of return of between 5 and 8 per cent after landed value alone. We have started establishing our fish-processing plant through a public/private partnership. Seabed mining is another potential source of revenue. However, we are mindful of the need to take a precautionary approach towards that particular industry, given the potential damage it could cause to our pristine marine environment.

We acknowledge the fundamental role of our environment as a pillar of sustainable development. Maintaining the health and biodiversity of our oceans and ecosystems will be critical. Our contribution to those efforts is the Phoenix Islands Protected Area, which was once the world's largest marine protected area. We have set aside that area as a haven for marine biodiversity, and that is our gift to humanity in recognition of the value of protecting our common heritage.

Ocean conservation is beyond the resources of any single country. Collaboration on cross-border initiatives is therefore essential to advancing our efforts in that regard. At the recent Pacific Islands Forum meeting in the Cook Islands, the United States and Kiribati announced plans to collaborate in building links between our adjoining marine parks in the Phoenix Islands, under the umbrella of the Phoenix Ocean Arc. That effort is our joint contribution to the Pacific Oceanscape Framework. We want to take this opportunity to invite the international community to partner with us in that endeavour.

Our message to the international community is that conservation of biodiversity and marine ecosystems in the Pacific is not only important to the sustainable development of Pacific island people. It is also of vital importance to the rest of the global community. The international community needs to support those efforts, not as a hand-out but as an investment for this planet's future generations.

In June, we met in Rio de Janeiro to review our progress 20 years on from the 1992 Earth Summit. Twenty years ago, we agreed that the protection of our global environment was critical for our future survival and that the pursuit of development must be based on the long-term sustainability of our natural resources. Unfortunately, our track record in delivering on our undertakings has not been good. In fact, in many respects, our environment is worse off today than it was 20 years ago. The fine balance keeping our planetary ecosystem together has been adversely affected by our pursuit of individual benefits at the expense of the collective good. While some members of our global family continue to benefit from the unsustainable exploitation of resources, others are having to pay the ultimate price. We do not believe that there is justice in that.

We renewed our commitment in June to achieving the future we want. That future will require our Organization to evolve to reflect the realities of our time, a time in which new and emerging security threats and injustices, such as climate change, are challenging the credibility of our international system of governance; a time in which the future survival of some nations is seriously in question; and a time when all those countries with the ability to do so must contribute to the prevention of such a calamity or be forever judged by history. If we are to provide a secure, peaceful and prosperous future for our children, then we must go beyond business as usual and deliver now. In fact, we should have delivered yesterday.

We accept the reality that, during these uncertain times, there is a need for the United Nations to remain as relevant and responsive as possible to the ever-changing needs and challenges of this world. In our discussions earlier this morning, I was most encouraged to be assured by the Secretary-General's commitment to ensuring that our Organization will undergo reforms in order to become more efficient, more transparent and more accountable. We also welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to strengthen partnerships with civil society and the private sector.

In fact, I believe that such a partnership must begin at the community and national levels before extending to the regional and international levels.

The fundamental fabric that binds us together as a family and as humanity is unravelling at the seams. Maintaining security and ensuring the survival of people in conflict areas, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, remain a major challenge to our Organization. Let us pray for the sake of those on the front line of the major global challenges that a greater understanding and stability will prevail.

It is gratifying to note the continued easing of tension and the improvement of relations across the Taiwan Straits. We also welcome the inclusion of countries such as Taiwan in the international activities of the World Health Assembly. We hope that a similar understanding will prevail in respect of other international institutions and processes so that Taiwan can participate and contribute meaningfully for the good of humanity.

As we chart the path towards the future that we want, we must address the fundamental threats to the very existence of the members of this family of nations. As a family, we must guarantee the survival of the members of our community. Climate change must be resolved before it is too late for those countries on the front line and, indeed, the whole of humanity.

We need compassionate, visionary and responsible leadership at this time in order to direct our path towards a more secure and just future. We owe it to our children and their children's children to act and act soon. So let us pray that God will give us the common sense to do the right thing for the future of humanity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: On behalf of my delegation and myself, may I extend to Mr. Jeremić our warmest congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. His extensive experience in both regional and international affairs will undoubtedly enrich the debate and the proceedings during this session. I wish to assure him of the full cooperation of Zimbabwe as he discharges the onerous duties of that high office.

If I may be allowed, I would like to preface my speech with a reference to the most glowing and moving speech that we heard from the President of the United States yesterday (see A/67/PV.6), the significance of which was to get us to condemn the tragic death of the United States Ambassador to Libya. I am sure that we were all moved and that we all agree that it was, indeed, an appalling event that we all condemn.

A year ago, we saw the barbaric and brutal death of the Head of State of Libya, which is a member of the African Union. His death occurred in a context in which NATO was operating supposedly in order to protect civilians. As we join the United States in spirit in condemning the Ambassador's death, will the United States also join us in condemning the barbaric death of the Head of State of Libya, Al-Qadhafi?

That great and tragic loss to Africa occurred in circumstances in which NATO had sought the authority of the Security Council under Chapter VII to operate in Libya in the protection of civilians, who were said to be at the mercy of the Government of Libya, led by Colonel Al-Qadhafi. The mission was strictly to protect civilians, but it became a brutal hunt for Al-Qadhafi and his family. NATO caught up with them. Al-Qadhafi and some of his children suffered the brutal deaths about which we know.

As the United States President spoke, I am sure that that he was aware that his country, as a NATO Power, had, alongside the other NATO Powers, the authority under Chapter VII to operate in Libya in order to protect civilians. But is that what the operation turned out to be? In a very dishonest manner, we saw the authority entrusted under Chapter VII being used as a weapon in order to rout a whole family and to commit the murders that occurred in that country. Bombs were hurled in a callous manner. Quite a number of civilians died. Was that the protection they had sought under Chapter VII of the Charter? So the death of Al-Qadhafi must be seen in the same tragic vein as the death of Chris Stevens. We condemn both.

Let me begin by reaffirming the rightful and important role of the United Nations in the management of issues affecting international peace and security. In the quest for a more just and equitable international order, Zimbabwe remains strongly opposed to unilateralism and committed to multilateralism. We would therefore like to see a United Nations that continues to be a guarantor of world peace and security and a bulwark in the fight for justice and equality among nations. It behoves us all, therefore, to take the necessary steps to ensure that the United Nations is not marginalized on international issues.

Equally important, the United Nations must, in future, never allow itself to be abused, as it was in the case I referred to earlier, when NATO sought under Chapter VII authority to protect civilians, but it did not turn out to be that. In the future, the Security Council must never allow itself to be abused by any Member State or group of States that seeks to achieve parochial, partisan goals. The Charter of the United Nations clearly stipulates that it is an international body that should work for the good of all the peoples of the world, big and small.

We recognize that there are existing and emerging threats and challenges that continue to frustrate our individual and collective efforts to attain greater economic development and social progress, as well as peace and security. But the increasing trend among the NATO member States, inspired by the arrogant belief that they are the most powerful among us — demonstrated in their recent resort to unilateralism and military hegemony in Libya — is the very antithesis of the basic principles of the United Nations. In the case of Libya, the African Union and its peacemaking role was defied, ignored and humiliated. The African Union sought dialogue between the Libyan authorities and the so-called revolutionaries. May we urge the international community to collectively nip this dangerous and unwelcome aggressive development in the bud before it festers.

In that regard, the theme that the President has chosen for this session — "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" — is very appropriate. This is what we in the African Union stress — the settlement of disputes in a peaceful way, through dialogue. The warmongers of our world have done us enough harm. Wherever they have imposed themselves, chaos in place of peace has been the result. One example was the situation created by the Bush-Blair illegal campaign in Iraq — an illegal campaign undertaken because it was alleged that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, when it was well known to those two and their Governments that he did not have such weapons — and, indeed, after invading Iraq, creating much havoc and getting rid of Saddam Hussein, they admitted that he had no weapons of mass destruction. So why had they attacked Iraq in the first place? Why did they seek to get rid of Saddam Hussein? Was it merely because he was a dictator, as they alleged? No, he was the head of a country that sat on tons and tons of oil. It was oil they required, and we saw companies — indeed, one such company was headed by a brother of Bush — rushing to suck oil from Iraq.

That is also what happened with Libya. The situation they created in Iraq has now brought about greater instability than there ever was. We have Sunnis rising against Shias, and vice versa, let alone the disastrous economic consequences of that unlawful invasion. The economy is unstable, society unstable, and people are fighting one another. Libya has been made equally unstable after NATO's deceitful intervention under the sham cover of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and the phony principle of the responsibility to protect. I listened to the speech made by the Secretary-General. He made reference to that principle. It is one that can be abused, and it has been abused. And, anyway, it is still being debated.

Zimbabwe firmly believes in the peaceful settlement of disputes between and among States in a manner that is consistent with the principles and purposes of the United Nations. In the maintenance of international peace and security, much more must be done to prevent conflicts from erupting in the first place, and to prevent relapses once a situation has been stabilized. Beyond deploying adequate resources for managing conflicts, it is important to address their underlying causes, and to pursue, more proactively, a comprehensive approach focusing on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, peace-maintenance and development. In pursuing thst cause, my delegation strongly believes that adherence to the Charter of the United Nations should be a solemn obligation of all Member States.

We have noticed, with deep regret, that the provisions of the United Nations Charter dealing with the peaceful settlement of disputes have, on occasion, been ignored by the Security Council. In contrast, there appears to be an insatiable appetite for war, embargoes, sanctions and other punitive actions, even on matters that are better resolved through multilateral cooperation and dialogue. Instead of resorting to the peaceful resolution of disputes, we are daily witnessing a situation where might is now right. We have said, "Well, yes, those who are powerful might hang on the principle that might is right", but certainly right is also might.

We need to take stock of the inspiring Preamble to the United Nations Charter, where the plenipotentiaries who met in San Francisco in 1945 undertook to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". That is especially pertinent at present, when global events represent a radical departure from that solemn and noble San Francisco declaration. What do the NATO alliance members have to say about that, one may ask.

It is therefore important that the Security Council should respect and support the decisions, processes and priorities of regional organizations. In contrast, recent events — as has already been stated — particularly with reference to Africa, have demonstrated the scant regard that the United Nations and certain powerful members of the international community give to the pivotal role of regional organizations. Effective cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations will become viable and sustainable only when developed on the basis of mutual respect and support, as well as on shared responsibility and commitment.

It is regrettable to note that certain unacceptable concepts are currently being foisted on the United Nations membership in the absence of intergovernmental mandates. For instance, there is no agreement yet on the concept of the responsibility to protect, especially with respect to the circumstances under which it might be invoked. We are concerned by the clear and growing evidence that the concept of responsibility to protect has begun to be applied and seriously abused, thus inevitably compromising and undermining the cardinal principle of the sovereignty of States and the United Nations Charter principles of territorial integrity and non-interference in the domestic affairs of countries.

For the international community to successfully deal with global economic, social, security and environmental challenges, the existence of international institutions to handle them and a culture of genuine multilateralism are critical. The United Nations, its specialized agencies and international financial institutions are the only instruments available for responding effectively to the global challenges we face in the global village. It is therefore critical that those structures be reformed and realigned in response to both global challenges and our contemporary realities, in order to enable them to better serve our collective interests.

This Assembly is the most representative organ within the United Nations family. We must therefore dedicate ourselves to finding consensus on measures to revitalize it so that it fulfils its mandate in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. We wish to reiterate our deep concern that the mandate, powers and jurisdiction of the General Assembly are shrinking as a consequence of the Security Council's gradual encroachment on the Assembly's areas of competence. That, in our view, upsets the delicate balance envisaged under the Charter and undermines the overall effectiveness of the United Nations system. The General Assembly must remain the main deliberative, policy-making organ of the United Nations.

We have been seized with the debate on the reform of the Security Council for far too long. My delegation fully supports the current intergovernmental negotiations on the reform and expansion of the Council. However, we wish to caution against an open-ended approach that short-changes those of us from regions that are not represented at all among the permanent membership of the Council. Zimbabwe stands by Africa's demand for two permanent seats, complete with a veto if the veto is to be retained, plus two additional non-permanent seats, as clearly articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

For how long will the international community continue to ignore the aspirations of a whole continent of 54 countries? We shall not be bought off with empty promises, nor shall we accept some cosmetic tinkering with the Security Council disguised as reform. It is indeed a travesty of justice that the African continent, which accounts for almost a third of the membership represented in this Assembly, has no permanent representation in the Council. Is that good governance? Is that democracy? And is that justice?

My delegation condemns unreservedly the economic sanctions imposed against my country and people in an unjustified effort to deny them the chance to fully benefit from their natural resource endowment. We wish to remind those who have maintained sanctions against us that there is international consensus — fully supported by the Southern African Development

Community, the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement and the rest of the progressive world — that these sanctions must go. We hope they will go.

Allow me to conclude by reaffirming Zimbabwe's commitment to the principles that have brought us together in the United Nations for the last 67 years. My country is confident that in this inextricably interdependent world, our commitment to the common good, which the Organization embodies, will be resolute and enduring. Zimbabwe will continue to stand firm and to condemn unilateralism, the imposition of unwarranted and illegal sanctions on nations and the unwarranted extraterritorial application of national laws.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Martelly (*spoke in French*): I come here to the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly to bring, on behalf of the Haitian people, my contribution to the debate that today brings together representatives of all peoples of the world.

The election of Mr. Jeremić to the Assembly presidency is for me a clear message that the small States Members of the United Nations can play a major role and make their contribution to peace, even in the global context of a sluggish economy. On behalf of the Haitian delegation, I would like to congratulate him for having raised and encouraged the theme for today's debate, which, unfortunately, is a concern of many Members of the great family of the United Nations.

Also permit me to pay a well-deserved tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the dynamism, wisdom, good judgement, vision and courage he has shown more than once in managing extremely sensitive international situations. I also would like to especially thank him for the particular attention he has bestowed on my country, Haiti.

Since my accession to power, the Haiti I love has attempted, in intent and in deeds — with many ups and downs, no doubt with successes and some mistakes — to emerge from its difficulties. I have been strongly dedicated to that effort. I can imagine that, with the impetus provided, results will be forthcoming in a matter of months or years. How could it be otherwise? Haiti today, the Haiti that I have the mission of serving, has understood that as long as there are quarrels, frustrations, poverty, underdevelopment and inequality, the world in general and Haiti in particular will never be protected from problems and controversies. As long as things are bad within nations, they will be tempted to turn to their neighbours and seek quarrels. Throughout long centuries of world history examples have not been lacking. That is why we say today that, while it is good to seek peaceful solutions to international disputes, it would perhaps be wiser to try to prevent them.

As long as access to water and to major markets, or just compensation for raw materials and sound economic competitiveness are not available to us, we will continue to have conflicts. As long as we at the United Nations do not pool our efforts so that access to health and to jobs and respect for differences become a reality, we will continue to face conflicts, and we will be reduced to painfully seeking peaceful solutions.

We champion gender equality and we promote democracy. We daily attempt to apply equal treatment for all under the law. Respect for the environment is inscribed in our programme of Government. In my view, those are the parameters that prevent uncontrolled migrations, climate change, useless wars, religion-related massacres, ethnic conflicts and terrorism.

In our common quest for harmony in a world with different cultures and diverse religions, we must allow our national dreams to emerge. Those dreams can be summed up as offering the possibility to every man and every woman, regardless of color, religion or political preference, to live in peace and to rear their children in dignity.

The Haiti of Toussaint Louverture, over two centuries ago, already understood that. Those national dreams, however, will not see the light of day if the commitments made to help the development of countries like ours are not implemented, if prejudice and suspicions of all kinds regarding the have-nots still prevail. In order to prevent those differences, we must regard others in a different way, with eyes purified, I would say, at the Pool of Siloam. Haiti continues to suffer from being regarded in the old way.

On the eve of Haiti's presidency of the Caribbean Community, I repeat that with good faith and goodwill, things can change, because our destinies, whatever side we may be on, are intimately intertwined. In a world where the global trend is towards the forming of economic and social blocs, the great can remain great only if they know how to transform the multiplicity of children of the planet into a single great social and economic family, respectful of the cultural and religious traditions of all, without exclusion.

Therefore the necessary dialogue must prevail among us, not the dialogue of the deaf in which we have been powerlessly enmeshed for decades. We must have real exchanges and negotiations that alone can put an end to the interminable conflicts, which have brought families grief and disrupted the peace of the world.

History has taught us that there is no justice or equality in international relations. History has also taught us that every nation looks after its own interests. The establishment of the United Nations kindled hope among peoples that things could be different. We cannot let that flame die. Within any family in general and within the family of the United Nations in particular, there cannot be great and small, giants and dwarfs, but equal beings with interests to defend and opinions to express on the basis of forward-looking relationships, relationships marked by liberty, equality, fraternity and the pursuit of happiness for all.

But let us not be misled: the best foundation for peace in the world, for prosperity and for defeating poverty will always be democracy. Under my leadership, Haiti has understood that and is making active use of democracy to strengthen previously weak or ineffectual local institutions. Haiti has understood that only veritable democracy can bring stability: it is the indispensable precondition for any development policy.

I wish to sincerely reiterate from this rostrum the urgent need we all must face to stop fighting and to work instead to protect the assets we share on this planet — to work together to reduce and manage the risks and disasters besetting the world, ruining our economies and hindering development.

To my colleagues, the leaders of the world, I wish to recall that our respective peoples have chosen us and entrusted to us the mandate of building a better world where no one will be left alone, where our children will finally be able to grow up in peace.

The words of Victor Hugo come to mind, pronounced at the Peace Congress in 1847: "The day will come when there will be no battlefields other than markets open to trade and minds open to ideas."

Those are my wishes for the assembly of nations. May the good Lord give us His blessings and enlighten us. May He bless the city of New York, which is receiving us so warmly, and grant us the wisdom and capacity to work towards a more beautiful and more just world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bērziņš: I commend the Secretary-General for his immense efforts in leading the United

Nations and its Secretariat to fulfil its mission and implement the tasks with which the Organization is charged. The theme of this session is very timely. The United Nations plays a leading role in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. It possesses the legal and institutional framework to do so.

States Members of the United Nations have committed themselves to the principles contained in the Charter. The peaceful settlement of disputes therefore primarily depends on the determination of the national and international leaders. Only if they are determined can the United Nations and other international organizations and institutions arrive at decisions and take action.

Let me speak about some concrete challenges that require strong will and decisive action by the international community. The conflict in Syria threatens security and stability in the whole region and beyond. Latvia urges all members of the Security Council to find the political will to unite and resolve that crisis. The lives of innocent people must be protected.

The risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is one of the most serious global threats. The international community should be united in its commitment to prevent it. Latvia is seriously concerned about the potential use of Syria's stockpiles of chemical weapons.

We deplore the lack of progress in dialogue with Iran on the nature of its nuclear programme. We believe that its full cooperation to clarify all outstanding questions is needed.

We call for strengthening the efforts to reach the goals of the the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its action plan. In that regard, we applaud the steps taken by the United States and Russia towards global disarmament and transparency. We hope that they will trigger further efforts to reduce the reliance on nuclear weapons.

Latvia also welcomes the consensus outcome of the second Review Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We should redouble our efforts to find solutions on the Arms Trade Treaty as soon as possible.

Latvia welcomes the increasingly active role played by regional organizations such as the African Union and the League of Arab States in the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

European regional organizations have also been actively working towards the resolution of protracted conflicts in the wider Europe. We see a positive trend towards a political settlement in Transnistria, Republic of Moldova. However, only with progress on the withdrawal of foreign troops will any settlement be sustainable. A multinational peacekeeping mission with an international mandate could be a rational way forward.

The consequences of the conflict in Georgia in 2008 will have a long-lasting effect on the security situation in the region. The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia is presently the only international player that monitors the implementation of the six-point agreement. Gaining actual access to the occupied territories would contribute to lasting progress. In addition, the restoration of a meaningful presence of the United Nations in Georgia is needed.

We remain concerned about the increasing number of incidents at the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflicting sides should abstain from hostile public rhetoric and should concentrate on confidence-building measures. The conduct of major military exercises in that volatile region should be avoided.

Afghanistan has been at the centre of the world's attention for much more than a decade. We believe that the international community is fully committed to assisting the Afghan Government in strengthening its public administration and the National Security Forces.

Latvia will continue its involvement in the European Union (EU) and NATO missions in Afghanistan. We also intend to participate in the missions after 2014. In addition, Latvia will provide a financial contribution to the international fund in support of the Afghan National Security Forces.

The future of Afghanistan is closely linked to economic development and regional cooperation. We encourage the full engagement of the Central Asian countries in discussions on the region's future. Afghanistan has the potential to become a regional hub for transportation and transit. Using our experience as an entry point to the Northern Distribution Network, Latvia is already engaged in training Afghan experts in the areas of transportation and anti-drug trafficking.

The global economic and financial crisis has focused leaders' attention on immediate measures to overcome it, often diverting their attention from long-term global challenges. The world economy remains fragile, even if some positive trends can be observed. Latvia welcomes all efforts to stabilize the situation in the eurozone and supports recent steps in that regard. We are working hard to be part of the solution and to become a net contributor to global economic stability.

Latvia's own gross national product grew more than 5.5 per cent in 2011. That positive trend is set to continue in 2012. Over the past decade, we have achieved significant progress with respect to both income and structural convergence. The quality of governance and economic structures in Latvia is comparable to that of the member countries of the Office of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Looking to the OECD's expected enlargement, Latvia is ready to offer its experience with transition and with the kind of decisive reforms that are leading us to recovery from the recent crisis.

Overall, Latvia has emerged from the downturn stronger and more competitive, with a balanced economy and a positive business environment that positions us well for the next growth cycle. Above all, the sustainability of economic health must go hand in hand with the process of incorporation into the eurozone. Latvia believes that the challenges can be overcome and aims to introduce the euro in 2014.

International peace and security are closely linked with two other pillars of the United Nations, namely, development and human rights. Latvia welcomes the establishment of the high-level panel on the post-2015 development agenda. We are pleased that the EU's Commissioner for Development, Mr. Andris Piebalgs of Latvia, will contribute to the panel's work.

The current framework of the Millennium Development Goals has revitalized global action on development and improved its effectiveness. Latvia's EU presidency in 2015 will evaluate the progress achieved and contribute actively to the agreement on post-2015 framework, which should remain people-centred, focused, time-bound and simple.

In recent years we have witnessed a growing number of people in many countries demanding freedom and justice. The international community must support their aspirations. We must help build stable democratic institutions and establish the rule of law. We believe that respect for human rights, good governance and inclusive economic development will help to prevent future conflicts.

Latvia participates in capacity-building in several conflict and post-conflict countries. We actively support nations in transition in their efforts to strengthen the rule of law. We welcome the fact that those issues are now part of the Secretary-General's five-year Action Agenda and we are committed to their implementation.

Latvia believes that economic and social development will benefit from the introduction of the principles of open Government. Civil society in Latvia actively participates in the decision-making process at all stages and levels.

Latvia fully supports the work of a strong and effective Human Rights Council. We have put forward our candidacy for the elections to the Council in 2014.

In order to keep pace with the modern world, the United Nations needs to change. The time has come to start real negotiations on reforming the Security Council. We support the enlargement of the Council in both the permanent and the non-permanent membership categories. Any enlargement of the Council should include at least one new non-permanent seat for the Eastern European Group.

The world is going through a period of turbulence, as shown by recent violent events in the Middle East.

We strongly condemn the attacks on diplomatic missions in several countries as unacceptable. Latvia fully supports the freedom of association and the right to demonstrate peacefully. We deplore any attempts to use religion to fuel extremism and violence. Tolerance and respect for our differences are the key to preventing conflicts and violence, both in our communities and internationally.

Finally, Latvia looks forward to a fruitful sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Let us address the challenges with true political will.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): The meetings we hold at the United Nations are always very important events at which we debate social, environmental, political and economic issues throughout the world. I commend the President of the General Assembly on having chosen as our central theme the peaceful settlement of disputes throughout the world.

I wish to take the great opportunity of my presence here today at the United Nations to inform the Assembly about a dispute between Chile and Bolivia. In 1879, as the result of an unjust war — an unjust invasion — masterminded by Chilean oligarchical interests, with the participation of transnational corporations with an eye on Bolivia's natural resources, we lost our corridor to the Pacific Ocean.

Bolivia was founded in 1825 and lost access to the sea in 1879. In the early 1900s, a treaty was signed that has not been complied with. It is for that reason that I have come here to take advantage of the theme of our debate, the peaceful settlement of disputes, to say that major disputes among States have been resolved and injustices rectified through the resolve and goodwill of the relevant authorities.

Chile cannot disregard Bolivia's rights or the pronouncements of an entire continent, much less prolong indefinitely our forcibly imposed landlocked status. An unjust, imposed and non-implemented treaty cannot be allowed to continue to harm a people that is only calling for justice and for an end to its country's status as a landlocked country.

The intangibility of treaties means that they are not dogma. Treaties, like all other creations of human beings, can be changed. I say that because when we state that Chile must return our sea corridor, we are asked, what treaty? I therefore wish to take this opportunity to speak of a treaty signed in 1903 between the United States and Panama on the Panama Canal.

In 1903, a treaty on the Panama Canal was signed under which the United States was authorized to build the Panama Canal and received sovereignty, in perpetuity, over the territories on both sides of the Canal and the area of the Canal. In other words, according to the Treaty of 1903, that country would be the owner for all eternity of the Panama Canal. However, a renegotiated treaty was signed in 1977 that gradually transferred sovereignty over the Canal zone from the United States to Panama, and in 1999 Panama recovered control and administration of the Canal through the Panama Canal Authority.

How did the United States return the Panama Canal to Panama when, through the first treaty, it had to be the owner of the Canal in perpetuity? And how is it possible for Chile not to return Bolivia's sea corridor?

I wish also to take this opportunity to say that today, in this millennium, is a time of integration and of focus on the protection of humankind, not a time of domestic or external colonialism. That is why I wish to reaffirm once again that the Malvinas are for Argentina and the sea is for Bolivia. These demands, conflicts and disputes have to be resolved peacefully, and Bolivia is a peace-loving country, in keeping with the State's new political Constitution.

Bolivia appeals once again to the Government of Chile, here before the Assembly, to resolve definitively the issue of our landlocked status through peaceful settlement mechanisms. We call on the international community to support us in that endeavour, so that this conflict, which does great harm to the integration of the American continent, may finally come to an end.

Among the Bolivian people, among children and grandparents alike, there is a strong sense of the need to recover our sea corridor. Bolivia was born with a sea, and it is not possible that oligarchies and transnational companies, in order to plunder our natural resources, can be allowed also to wrest from us our territory. We need the support of all those at the helm of the United Nations to put an end to a historical injustice on the part of international Powers.

Yesterday I listened to the various statements on issues related to democracy, human rights and peace, and I feel that the statements we make here as Presidents show that we agree in theory. All of us here are great defenders of human rights who want peace and defend democracy. But we are divided. The United Nations is not united, and that makes a great difference. I listened very carefully to the statement made by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon telling us that we have to change the world. We very much agree that we have to change the world. But how can we change the world if we do not change the United Nations? How can the United Nations be responsible for interventionism on many continents?

I have listened to two or three addresses by several countries, and I was very pleased. There seems to be a rebellion on the part of States against powers, authority and capitalism. I am very pleased, because when I came here for the first time in 2006, only the countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Countries of Our America, with great ideological, political and programmatic clarity, stated that everything was for the people. I know some countries on other continents — very timid and fearful countries — feel that today are losing their fear of the Powers. I would like to say to them, to their representatives and to their Presidents that we should not be afraid. We should not be afraid of empires or capitalism. Capitalism and imperialism are not the solution to life or to humanity.

We are living in times of the crisis of capitalism, of a crisis in food. I remember when I was still a trade union leader, we conducted campaigns to have the external debt of underdeveloped countries — at that time, they were called underdeveloped countries, instead of developing countries — cancelled. Now I realize that our debt as poor countries can be paid, but the debts of capitalism are impossible to pay. That is what the world we are living in today shows.

We speak here of democracy. We have to defend democracy and, in order to do that, we have to intervene in some countries. But if we really wanted to be democratic, we would respect all of the resolutions of the United Nations. Just to cite an example, does the Government of the United States of America respect United Nations resolutions on the economic embargo against Cuba? It has never respected them. That is due to pride on the part of the rulers, not of the American people. The rulers are never going to respect those resolutions, but they speak of democracy and of defending democracy.

In that connection, I must express our full backing for the Cuban people. Their commander, former President Fidel Castro, the most caring person in the world that I have ever known — and I admire that revolutionary people — is, despite the embargo, engaged in continuous battle at the side of his people. It is not possible that in the twenty-first century an economic embargo continues against the Cuban people, a genocidal embargo that has failed and which violates the rights of an entire people. The embargo has been condemned by almost all of humankind and the international community, including the allies of the United States of America, for its extraterritorial character and its imposition in violation of humanitarian and international law. Bolivia also denounces the unjust inclusion of Cuba on the list unilaterally assembled by the United States in its report entitled "State Sponsors of Terrorism", the purpose of which is to justify the embargo and continue imposing new sanctions on the regime and the people of Cuba. What authority does the Government of the United States have to include a country in the list of terrorist countries? Do not all the peoples of the world realize that the number one terrorist country practicing State terrorism is the Government of the United States? There have been so many interventions, so many dead and wounded, so much killing — under the pretext of defending democracy.

Moments ago, a fellow president spoke about an intervention in Libya to restore democracy, which is a lie. They intervened in Libya not for its people but to recover oil for the Powers. We have to be sincere and straightforward with humankind, but where there are presidents who stay in power without practicing democracy but are in favour of capitalism and imperialism, there is no intervention because they are allies of the United States Government; they are allies of the empire; they are allies of capitalism. Where there are natural resources, like oil, in the hands of the people, they have to intervene under any pretext — terrorism, dictatorship or drug trafficking — all of it to recover or to plunder the natural resources.

Furthermore, I would also like to launch an appeal for the immediate release of five Cuban anti-terrorist political prisoners in the United States. Their release would show a political will to defend human rights. The President of the United States could release them; the power to do so is in his hands. I hope that justice will be done to our five Cuban brothers, who have been imprisoned unjustly.

In truth, I do not understand it when the presidents who speak in defence of human rights are never the ones who respect human, either within or outside their own countries. I do not understand how one can speak of peace while there are economic inequalities in the world. While there is an economic policy that concentrates capital in the hands of a few and which impoverishes many, there will never be justice, there will never be peace or respect for human rights. Indeed, the economic models that concentrate capital in a few hands provoke injustice and create uprisings.

I feel that now is the best time — I am referring to various meetings at the United Nations — to gain better understanding of the situation of all the peoples of the world. We had requested the revision of some important international treaties concerning a very important product for the indigenous peoples of the Andean region, the coca leaf. Although the coca leaf has medicinal and ritual properties, it has been penalized under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Therefore, Bolivia, which wishes to remain faithful to its commitment to fight drug trafficking, has requested adherence to the Single Convention with a reservation that preserves the right to use coca leaf for cultural purposes, especially medicinal purposes, within our territory.

In some states of the United States, it is legal to sell cocaine, but the United States does not allow us to consume coca leaf — which is not cocaine. I welcome the support for the proposal on the part of many countries of the continent and the world — non-aligned countries — recognizing, after thousands of years, the consumption of coca leaf as legal. I respectfully request that the Assembly, acting on behalf of the United Nations, correct a historical prejudicial act.

Unfortunately, since there is an illegal market for coca leaf, that is, a market for cocaine or drugs, a portion of the harvest is diverted to the illegal market — but we are fighting that. We in Bolivia say that there will be no free cultivation of coca, but there cannot be zero coca leaf.

I commend the United Nations for issuing a report a few weeks ago affirming that, for the first time, Bolivia had reduced the cultivation of coca by more than 12 per cent. That is a Government achievement without any dead or wounded; previously, that kind of reduction resulted in many dead and wounded. Now, while maintaining respect for human rights and appealing to the conscience of my coca-producing brothers and sisters, we have had a net reduction.

Coca cultivation has increased in some countries, which are subsequently decertified by the United States of America. But the United States has also decertified a country like Bolivia, even though it has reduced the cultivation of coca by 12 per cent. Do we then have to plant more coca for the Government of the United States to certify us? One cannot understand it. Of course, since we are an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist people and Government, we have been decertified. That decertification is a political statement; it does not take into account the efforts made by the Bolivian people through its Government.

We are not interested in whether we are certified or not. That is the least of it. What we are interested in is the United Nations data. Honestly, the United Nations works in a transparent manner to recognize the work that our Government has done to reduce coca cultivation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to talk about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Bolivia was previously a little-known country that had been abandoned, living on foreign aid. We welcomed foreign aid. I would just like to present what we have achieved since we took charge in Bolivia, in the context of the MDGs.

Bolivia was supposed to reduce extreme poverty to 24.1 per cent by 2015. I would like to report that, by 2011, we had reduced extreme poverty to 20 per cent. We have a plan. By the time Bolivia celebrates its bicentennial, we will have eradicated extreme poverty. The numbers from international organizations confirm that, last year, 10 per cent of the population went from extreme poverty to the middle class. That is 1 million Bolivians.

The second figure to note is that, according to the MDG targets, 78.5 per cent of the population should have access to safe drinking water by 2015. I would like to say that, as a result of our programme, this year we reached 78.5 per cent of the country, especially the indigenous rural communities. We have a programme called "My Water" to promote greater investments in water. What I did personally was to bring together all of the projects on safe drinking water or water for irrigation from every municipality in the country. For the second year in a row, we have invested $300,000 per municipality, and that has been rather helpful, in addition to other programmes by the Ministry of the Environment and Water, in particular in cities and in rural areas. Those programmes for drinking water mean that we have achieved our goal in 2012, not in 2015. Hopefully, by 2015 we will have achieved 90 or 100 per cent drinking water coverage. That is our programme.

Another of the Goals pertains to coverage in terms of hospital births. The MDG target for 2015 is 70 per cent. I am here to report that by 2009 we had achieved 70 per cent coverage, not to mention other programmes such as the one that provides subsidies for pregnant women and children under the age of two. We are making good progress, although with slow steps.

Why has there been such rapid change? Social programmes and structural changes have allowed us to change Bolivia. One example is telecommunications. Bolivia has 339 municipalities. In 2006, telephone coverage or mobile phone coverage in rural areas existed in only 90 municipalities. The day after tomorrow, I am going to inaugurate mobile communication in the last municipality, the furthest from the cities, in the Bolivian Amazon. Now my brothers and sisters living in rural areas have telephones or mobile phones in all 339 municipalities. Entel, our telephone service, had been privatized. We took it back, nationalized it, and began to invest in it in order to provide better service.

We have made progress for the following reason. As President, I received a mandate from the Bolivian people to recover or nationalize our natural resources. The biggest company in Bolivia is Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB). For 20 years, neoliberal Governments worked to privatize our natural resources. They sold our natural resources, especially oil, to transnational corporations. Bolivia received only 18 per cent of all the profits, while 82 per cent went to transnational corporations. In addition, what did the contracts signed by neoliberal Governments say? Who was the owner? The oil transnational corporations acquired the right of ownership at the mouth of the well. The Governments would tell us that the oil and gas continued to be ours as long as it was under the ground. But once it came to the mouth of the well, it belonged to the transnational corporations. We fought, we mobilized, we raised awareness among the Bolivian people as to the importance of retaking or nationalizing that natural resource. On 1 May 2006, we nationalized that industry without any misgivings.

That act changed the national economy. In 2006, our international reserves stood at $1.7 billion. Our international reserves now stand at more than $13 billion. In 2005, YPFB had $300 million in revenue. This year, it has $3.5 billion. In 2005, total public investments amounted to $600 million. Out of that $600 million, 70 per cent came from aid and loans and only 30 per cent came from the national treasury. This year State investments will amount to approximately $6 billion, with an additional $6 billion in private investments. How did that change come about in such a short period of time?

Of course, Bolivia is a small country. But we have managed to change our national economy. That is why I say to countries whose natural resources, including oil and gas, are still in private hands that my recommendation is for them to nationalize and recover their natural resources. Natural resources cannot belong to transnational corporations; they belong to the peoples of the world, under State administration.

I would also like to say that there have been social changes. Through a constituent assembly, we have guaranteed basic services as a human right. Consequently, they cannot be in private hands. It is a task for the State. Water, electricity and communications — we have nationalized them and turned them into human rights. It is very important that those basic services be human rights. While we still have some problems in Bolivia with electricity, we will continue to work to ensure that that basic service is a human right as well.

I am here to share our brief experience with Governments, presidents, ambassadors and prime ministers. Where there is the will to change, there will be change. It depends to a large extent on willingness, constant efforts to educate our people and transparent work. Of course, we still have so many demands to meet — sometimes, too, exaggerated demands from a particular social sector or region — but regardless of our interests or claims, our homeland and humankind as a whole come first.

Dealing as we are with the problems we have in Bolivia and the world with climate issues, I would like to take this opportunity to convey an invitation to an international meeting on 21 December to greet a new era, an invitation to the celebration of the end of the cycle of non-time and the beginning of a new cycle of equilibrium and harmony for Mother Earth. It would take too long here to go into the knowledge of our indigenous brothers in Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia and Ecuador, but basically we are issuing this invitation to a virtual — and actual — debate on the following topics.

First, the global crisis of sapitalism; second, the crisis of civilization — world Government, capitalism, socialism, community and the culture of life; third, the crisis of climate — human beings' relationship to nature; fourth, the energy of community and change; fifth, awareness of Mother Earth; sixth, recovering ancestral practices and customs and the natural cosmic calendar; seventh, living the right way as a solution to the global crisis — because once again we affirm that we cannot live better by plundering natural resources, and that is a profound debate that we should have with the whole world; eighth, food sovereignty and security through food sovereignty; ninth, integration — through brotherhood, community, economy, complementarity, the right to communication, and community learning for life; the new human being with an integrated identity; complementarity; self-knowledge, awakening and, of course, health, which is so important.

I would like to say that according to the Mayan calendar, 21 December marks the end of the non-time and the beginning of time. It is the end of the *macha* — the darkness — and the beginning of the *pacha* — communitarianism; it is the end of selfishness and the beginning of brotherhood; it is the end of individualism and the beginning of collectivism. As scientists know very well, 21 December this year marks the end of the era of anthropocentrism and the beginning of biocentrism. It is the end of hatred and the beginning of love, the end of lies and the beginning of truth, the end of sadness and the beginning of joy, it is the end of division and the beginning of unity. This is a theme to be developed, and that is why we invite all those here, those who are betting on humankind, to share their experiences for the good of humankind.

As always, I would like to thank the President for these debates at the United Nations. We are always thinking about new generations and about the good of humankind, although sometimes sectoral interests intrude — but as representatives who come here from time to time, we have an obligation to think about how to shoulder our responsibilities, and that means, as someone said just now, bringing an end to the powers that be. This is not a time when we can continue to praise those powers; we are living in a time when peoples must be freed and where we must constantly seek economic and social equality for all human beings, a time to bring dignity to every citizen.

I would like to commend those statements that questioned interventionism, military bases and troops. There will be social peace only when we change such political and economic policies and put an end to military bases and interventionism. My respect goes to those who resist military intervention by the Powers, which is not a solution. That is something we have learned, and that is why we hope that these debates will serve to help us think about life and humanity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Ms. Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia.

Ms. Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Njie-Saidy (Gambia): I have the singular honour of reading the statement of His Excellency Mr. Al Hadji Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, the President of the Republic of the Gambia, who would have loved to be here today but was unable to so, owing to unavoidable circumstances. However, he sends his best wishes to all present. I will now read his statement.

> "First and foremost, I thank Allah, the Almighty, for making another annual gathering of world leaders possible. I would first like to

congratulate the President on his election and wish him success in his tenure as he manages the affairs of the Assembly. Let me also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless leadership and sterling contribution to the creation of a better world for all.

"Our world unquestionably continues to be plagued by numerous challenges that can be solved only through our collective response. Multilateral diplomacy and institutions surely offer the best hope yet for tackling our development conundrums, protracted conflicts and man-made and natural disasters.

"Peace and security will always remain a cornerstone of the Organization and for that reason my delegation is concerned with the matter and welcomes the President's choice of the theme 'Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means'.

"As we speak, many conflicts are raging around the world in ways that challenge the credibility and clout of the Organization. The paralysis displayed by our common security mechanisms, for example, is astounding. Geopolitical interests have trampled the goodwill and humanitarian concerns that should compel us all to address those raging infernos — be they in the Middle East, Asia, Africa or elsewhere. Our collective security will continue to be undermined by geopolitical considerations, unless and until we find the courage to reform the Security Council. Ongoing conflicts, for example in Mali, Guinea-Bissau and Syria, are all recent cases in point. The Security Council should not be the stumbling block in the way of the settlement of disputes by peaceful or other means. Rather, it should be a more helpful institution.

"My delegation is fully aware of the need for the peaceful settlement of some of the conflicts in Africa, but we are equally aware of the need for robust action in dealing with the spoilers and merchants of death and misery in the continent. The Economic Community of West African States is working to find solutions to all those conflicts but needs, of course, the support of the international community.

"We see the role of the Security Council as a partner and enabler of decisive action, but time is running out. The elements of doom have been emboldened by our inaction. The United Nations and the United Nations Office for West Africa must work decisively to address the conflicts in Mali and Guinea-Bissau without delay. The engagement of the African Union (AU) will undoubtedly be crucial. Terrorists, drug dealers and organized criminal networks should be stopped in their tracks at all costs before it is too late.

"The relevance of the Organization has at times been questioned, but one element that remains unchallenged is its character as the best forum for confronting global challenges. As we convene to discuss the issues of climate change, economic crises, financial turmoil, food insecurity, conflicts, fighting disease and poverty, or the special interests of Africa, the convening power of the United Nations confers a legitimacy that is indeed unparalleled elsewhere.

"As developing countries, we therefore believe in the work that this Organization of ours does, and it is for that reason that we will support the efforts of the President of the General Assembly to revitalize it — as the voice for the voiceless.

"We also use this forum to call on the international financial institutions to open up and embrace overdue reforms. They should be transparent and inclusive and raise the profile of their smallest members, such as low-income countries or least developed countries (LDCs). We call on them to embrace the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs.

"The Istanbul Programme of Action must not become a string of broken promises, unfulfilled commitments and weak resource mobilization, as happened with its predecessors. As LDCs we are ready to hold ourselves accountable for the implementation of the commitments we made in Istanbul. We are equally ready to meet the targets set out in the Programme. It is therefore our collective hope, expectation and belief that our partners and the rest of the international community will also fulfil their commitments and uphold their part of the bargain. Let us work together to bring about the graduation of half of the LDCs by 2020, in line with the target we set ourselves. It is achievable if we all forge the appropriate global partnerships for resource mobilization.

"The scorecard on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) shows that, while some achievements have been made with regard to some of the Goals, a great deal still remains to be achieved. My country has achieved some of the key elements of the MDGs and is on track to meet all of them. In view of the fact that 2015 is just around the corner, we need to do more to mobilize the remaining resources required to further improve the critical links needed for success on the achievement of the MDGs.

"Critical to the achievement of the MDGs will be the scaling up of resources by enhancing the global partnerships that we have forged for the Goals. We must mobilize the modest resources that are needed so that 2015 will not be another unfulfilled milestone.

"The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) has defined the mechanisms through which sustainable development goals should be negotiated and agreed upon. It is our hope that the consultations on the post-Rio mechanisms will be inclusive, transparent and representative. Beyond managing the depleting resources of the Earth, we must all push for ambitious and realistic goals and targets on sustainable food, water and energy. We must also take into account the special situations of LDCs and other vulnerable groups of countries.

"My delegation is of the strong belief that, in the euphoria for sustainable development goals, the drive towards the achievement of the MDGs must not be compromised in any way. We must hold ourselves accountable for meeting the Goals by 2015, and not try to shift the goalposts when the deadline is close at hand. We must also lay a solid groundwork for the post-2015 development agenda.

"For developing countries to continue to benefit from the appreciable growth they are experiencing and in order not to compromise their capacities to provide education, health care and other social services to their peoples, debt cancellation or forgiveness is still a key element. Debt servicing still poses a major threat to our ability to attain sustainable growth. It is our belief that our partners and the Bretton Woods institutions should consider the further extension of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

"As we strive in the Sahel to deal with drought and the crop failure of the past year, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his laudable efforts, as we heard today, through his initiative for the Sahel and for his plans to assist the region, including Mali. We thank him for that initiative, which we look forward to seeing realized. We also thank all our development partners for the support they have rendered, both to my Government and to the Sahel. We are grateful for their solidarity and humanitarian support. In view of the perennial nature of food insecurity in our region, it is my humble and considered view that the international community needs to do more to render greater support to the agricultural sector of our economies.

"The role of the small-scale farmer needs to be boosted, and we must, through global partnerships, fast-track the numerous agricultural initiatives that have been announced to support African agriculture. Agricultural systems across Africa need to be made more resilient in terms of inputs, technological know-how, scientific research and the setting up of related training institutions. The African farmer needs to benefit from modern farming techniques and technology. In that context, I would like to thank the Government and people of Australia for their outstanding generosity towards boosting agriculture and food security in Africa.

"With the establishment of UN-Women, the United Nations took a great step forward in mainstreaming the gender dimension into its work. As an ardent supporter of women's rights and participation in all sectors of society, I must commend UN-Women for the way it has been evolving. We look forward to the establishment of its regional offices. We will work with all concerned to advance the promotion of the rights of women and girls, once we assume our position as a member of the Executive Board. Advancing the welfare of women, which starts with girls as future women, will always be a priority for my Government.

"Africa is indeed witnessing a revolution in information and communications technology, which is a critical sector for us. Our considered view is that, with the completion of the Africa Coast to Europe submarine cable network, there will be an even greater transformation in that very important sector. It should further help to increase the transfer of critical technology for the economic advancement of our peoples.

"In that project we see a great opportunity for South-South and North-South cooperation in ways that will revolutionize education, agriculture and the provision of health care, among other areas. We therefore call on our partners to support the growth of the information and communications technology sector with a view to enhancing our productive capacity, while also generating youth employment, since youth unemployment is one of the greatest threats to humankind and to our social and economic advancement. We must therefore form partnerships across the globe to address that dangerous phenomenon, which is a disaster waiting to happen.

"Allow me to address some recent conflicts that threaten the peace and stability of Africa and the world at large. Our youth, for example, are being sucked into conflicts and a life of crime, with their productive talents being wasted. Our modest gains are being wiped out through instability, and even our societal cohesion is seriously threatened. If we do not act fast now, we risk creating more upheavals, which will overwhelm our capacity to contain them. The international community will therefore pay a very high price if it does not wake up from its slumber and solve the situations in Mali and Guinea-Bissau that I highlighted earlier.

"In West Africa, our ongoing security challenges are being compounded by such situations. ECOWAS should not be left alone to shoulder the burden of those conflicts. I am elated by the fact that, this morning, the issues of Mali, the entire Sahel and the Maghreb were discussed. The AU and ECOWAS are ready, and I hope that the international community, particularly the Security Council, is also ready. The AU is ready to act to salvage the situations in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. The Security Council must, as I have said, act with a sense of greater urgency. We cannot let terrorists, drug dealers and organized criminal gangs establish a sanctuary in our backyard.

"In line with our foreign policy, the Gambia stands ready, as always, to contribute meaningfully to the settlement of such conflicts. The level of steadfastness shown in solving the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone some years ago must now, we hope, equally be shown in Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

"The situation in Darfur continues to occupy the attention of my delegation, as well. We call for more dialogue in finding a lasting solution to that major conflict. We are equally concerned about the lingering conflict between the Sudan and South Sudan. Dialogue is essential, and is the only way forward to solve that conflict. The parties must implement the recommendations of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and those of the road map.

"As they embark on settling the outstanding issues, we urge our brothers and sisters to demonstrate the same magnanimity and extraordinary statesmanship that characterized the establishment of the independence of South Sudan. They should remember that they will be neighbours forever and, as such, are mutually dependent upon each other for their national security.

"Let me commend the forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia, the United Nations and the African Union for the progress that they are making in Somalia. The pressure must be sustained until all of Somalia is liberated and is placed under the sole authority of the Somali Government. Insecurity and piracy must be stamped out. The spoilers must be denied sanctuary, lest they continue destabilizing the whole of the Horn of Africa.

"As we dwell on such situations, we are equally concerned about the conflicts ravaging the Middle East. Afghanistan, for example, has been in a state of unrest for too long. It is time that Afghans be given enough space and capacity to solve their problems. Home-grown and inclusive dialogue and national reconciliation are the best way forward to lasting peace and stability in that country.

"We all witnessed the dramatic and historic events that have recently transformed parts of the Middle East and Africa. It is therefore our hope that those transformations will endure and will nurture the ideals of peace, security, development and democracy. We must not lose sight of some of the negative concomitant effects of those upheavals, as is currently evident in Syria.

"My delegation believes that the Annan plan could have brought about stability and could have provided the space for dialogue among the parties, if it had been given a chance. It seems that there is lack of goodwill and trust among the parties, as well as the invisible hand of external elements determined to achieve a particular outcome. Syria is now a deeply divided society. The international community is partly to blame on account of its inaction.

"The Palestinian situation is indeed deplorable. It has deteriorated to the point that a one-State solution may be inevitable. In defiance of international law, human decency and restraint, Israel, the occupying Power, is imposing a de facto situation on Palestinians through its despicable settlement activity and land seizures. The sad reality is that it is the mechanisms of the Security Council, which are constantly invoked, that further delay or stifle the action necessary to bring about lasting peace in Palestine. Israel's excesses, namely, the land seizures, settlement activity, mass imprisonment of Palestinians, denial of revenue, maiming and murder of Palestinians by the State apparatus and many others, must be halted. The truth is bitter when told, but it will set us all free.

"Let me also address some burning political issues of our time. The embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States 50 years ago is still in place for no justifiable reason. Even if perhaps it made sense at the time, keeping it in place today does not make any sense at all. It is shameful that, in the twenty-first century, a Cold War relic remains the main stumbling block between the establishment of good-neighbourly relations and the rejection of empty political cacophony in some quarters. We therefore call upon the United States to lift the embargo and throw it into the dustbin of history, where it rightfully belongs.

"My delegation would also like to use this rostrum to appeal to the collective membership of the United Nations, including China, to contribute to opening the avenues for Taiwan's membership in the various funds, agencies, treaty bodies and programmes. That would only enhance the effectiveness of those bodies for our mutual benefit. The world, not only Taiwan, stands to benefit. We all agree that Taiwan is a key player in technology, international trade, politics and many other areas. It has enduring ties with China. We therefore appeal for the practical extension of the rapport that Taiwan has with China to the international stage. China conducts trade, business and tourism with Taiwan. As I speak, both are engaging in discussing a range of bilateral issues. The rest of the international community, including the States Members of the United Nations, should follow suit. Avenues for dialogue must be opened.

"The stalled reform of the Security Council is disheartening and even dangerous. Year in and year out, we come to the General Assembly. We meet in various forums to discuss the issues. We hold dialogues and exchanges and come up with proposals. Then we get nowhere. I will mention what Kofi Annan said at the time of launching his well-known report "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005), namely, that no reform of the United Nations is complete without the reform of the Security Council. I think that is critical. It is as valid now as it was when it was said seven years ago. The resistance to change should come to an end. The paralysis of the reform agenda must come to an end. We cannot afford as a group to be in a state of coma when larger regional interests, especially those of Africa, are at stake and get shunted around or jettisoned. Africa needs to be at the table and we will not budge on that demand, as previous speakers have said and as our heads of State have reiterated here. We must reform or risk delegitimizing the actions taken, and the decisions made, in the name of our collective security.

Ms. Flores (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

"Allow me, at this point, to recognize the appointment of His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, the new Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. We have confidence in his abilities and experience as an astute statesman. We are also aware of his keen interest in Africa and his engagement with our continent at various periods in his diplomatic life. We therefore look forward to jointly advancing the special needs of Africa with him under the guidance of the Secretary-General.

"On a final note, it is my hope that the next Presidents of the General Assembly will consider other themes beyond that of peace and security, although there can be no doubt that peace and security are critical. Where possible an intermarriage of themes might also be considered."

I wish all members a successful General Assembly session.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Elio di Rupo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. Elio di Rupo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Elio di Rupo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Di Rupo (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, on behalf of my country, I would like to welcome the broad vision and the pertinence of the ideas put forward by the Secretary-General.

I come from Belgium, one of the six founding countries of the European Union (EU), a multicultural union of 500 million people who, as President Obama has reminded us, live in peace — something that I wish for the entire world — after experiencing horrifying wars.

Belgium provides a unique setting for political decisions and international meetings. Brussels is the capital of Europe and also the seat of NATO headquarters. We are naturally open to the world. I myself come from the city of Mons, which will be the European cultural capital in 2015. In 2014, Belgium will solemnly commemorate the centennial of the start of the sad and painful First World War. We will do so in memory of the young people from more than 50 countries who, on our territory, defended the ideals of peace and freedom. In 2013, Antwerp will host the World Outgames, a gathering of tolerance and diversity, while the city of Liège is a candidate to host the World's Fair in 2017. All those international events have a single goal: to bring us closer together and to mobilize around universal values.

For my country, respect for life and human rights is fundamental. Whether we speak of the rights of the child, of women or of refugees, or of the struggle against all forms of discrimination, a single principle guides my country: the effective equality of all human beings, regardless of status or beliefs. In that light, Belgium will join Slovenia in sponsoring a draft resolution against racial discrimination. I hope members will support it.

All heads of State and ministers share an immense collective responsibility to ensure that women become equal to men worldwide at the political, social and economic levels; to ensure that little girls are no longer subjected to circumcision; and that acts of violence against women are systematically fought and eliminated.

In my country, women head three ministries: the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of the Police. Significant efforts have also been made to more effectively combat domestic violence. Our national laws prohibit and punish all forms of discrimination, whether on the basis of gender or that of claimed race, disability or sexual orientation. In my country, both marriage and adoption are open to same-sex couples. Those are grounds for pride in Belgium.

With the support of several countries of the European Union, Belgium invites members to take vigorous, concerted action in various realms of social life. I am thinking first and foremost of the decriminalization of sexual orientation and the promotion of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. In that regard, I welcome the initiative of UNESCO to counter homophobia in schools.

For my country, freedom of religion, which is to say the freedom to practise or not practise a religion, is fundamental. Belgium unequivocally condemns Islamophobia. We just as firmly condemn violence, which is unacceptable in all cases. We believe that human beings should be free to think what they wish and be able to express their indignation without ever resorting to violence. Diplomatic missions should be inviolable throughout the world. It is not by oppressing human beings or promoting violence that the fundamental challenges of prosperity, the well-being of citizens and peace will be resolved.

Belgium attaches particular importance to strengthening the rule of law throughout the world. The reason for that is simple: in my country we are convinced that the rule of law is necessary for development and prosperity. It contributes to a better world, because the purpose of the rule of law is to enable every human being to live, flourish and love in complete freedom. For that reason, and in the spirit of mutual human respect, we support the principle of the responsibility to protect victims of violence wherever they are. In the same spirit, Belgium responded to the Secretary-General's call by instituting 17 specific projects.

The rule of law and the enforcement of respect for human rights require us to step up the fight against impunity. Belgium will continue its policy of active cooperation with international criminal tribunals. The action of the International Criminal Court will help to usher in an era of responsibility. It is incumbent upon all States to cooperate with the Court. Belgium, together with Slovenia and the Netherlands, calls on all States represented here to improve international cooperation in mutual legal assistance and extradition.

As the President of Brazil pointed out (see A/67/PV.6), the effects of the economic crisis and financial speculation are felt by every household. When the balance sheets of banks represent 300 per cent, 400 per cent or 600 per cent of gross domestic product — indeed, even more in some countries — we should not be surprised that there is a direct link between bank management and the economic and budgetary health of sovereign States. In many countries in-depth studies have been carried out and decisions taken, but clearly that is not enough. That is because the financial world operates in line with the rhythm of its own peculiar logic. Here at the United States the phenomenon is better understood than elsewhere. Programme trading dominates financial exchanges. The software reacts a million times faster than human traders, buying and selling thousands of shares every millionth of a second. We must work together here at the international level to establish oversight mechanisms for the financial world, with a view to ensuring that it again assists more in job creation and that it steers clear of risky management practices that compromise the economic and budgetary health of nations.

In Belgium we are working on the issue nationally and within the eurozone. But an agreed international approach is becoming indispensable. Beyond such in-depth reforms in the banking and financial sectors, let us also dare to tax financial transactions. It is high time that income derived from that source be used to promote prosperity for our people.

The Assembly is committed to the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. We can never underline enough that we must break with an economic development model that devours natural resources and energy. Belgium supports the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative. It also stresses the importance of merging within one process the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable development goals.

I would like to turn to some regional issues that my country finds especially disturbing and tragic. In the Great Lakes region, the situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the resurgent violence and the Mouvement du 23 Mars rebellion greatly concern the Belgian Government, especially because of their serious impact on local populations. We see images of massacres, rape, forced recruitment, including of children, pillaging, 400,000 internally displaced persons — all of it completely unacceptable. Belgium calls upon the countries of the region to redouble their efforts to put an end to the current rebellion. We also call for a response to the root causes of instability in the Great Lakes region. We commend the Secretary-General's attention to the region and his initiative in calling a high-level meeting tomorrow on the crisis. Our Foreign Minister will attend, and Belgium stands ready to do what it can to help.

The territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must categorically be respected. All external support for the rebels must stop. Let us not delude ourselves. Denying the facts does not make them disappear. The facts on the ground give the lie to all denials. Belgium calls on all countries in the Great Lakes region to pledge to respect the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Belgium also urges the Congolese authorities to institute the necessary reforms in the army and the police to re-establish the rule of law in the whole of its territory, including, obviously, the eastern part.

I dearly hope that reason will prevail. Belgium is ready to work to help restore trust among the countries of the region. We furthermore hope that direct relations between the President of the Democratic Republic of the

Congo and the President of Rwanda can be established and that it will speed progress towards a solution.

As to Syria, we are all deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation of an impasse on the ground, and a political impasse as well. We are appalled by the posture of a regime that kills its own citizens. Beyond the 30,000 dead there are at least 250,000 refugees in neighbouring countries, and even more internally displaced. How is it that the collective human conscience is not in agreement to stop the massacre? I say respectfully to the members of the Security Council that we cannot knowingly allow such human suffering to go on. Unless we take action we are complicit in crimes against humanity.

Belgium has faith in and supports Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi. Belgium also supports the efforts by Arab countries and hopes that they will be successful. We must all hope for a political solution. One thing is certain. Bashar Al-Assad must leave. The regime has lost all legitimacy. Given the urgency of the situation and the approaching winter, Belgium urges the international community to take concrete steps on the humanitarian front and to come to the aid of the millions of people affected. Humanitarian concerns are our highest priority. The Belgian Government provides financial support for humanitarian aid to the refugees.

In that connection, I will allow myself to insist that my country demands earnestly that a solution be found to enable humanitarian organizations to carry out their work, particularly in hospitals, in line with international humanitarian law. I believe that both the Chinese and Russian authorities will be able to join us in those objectives.

I have another comment concerning the region; I wish to mention the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Belgium favours the rapid resumption of negotiations aimed at finding a solution based on the coexistence of two States — the State of Israel and a State of Palestine that is independent, democratic, united and viable — living together in peace, security and prosperity. We also wish to state very clearly our opposition to the continuation of colonization.

My country believes that multilateralism is the only way to improve conditions of our planet. Belgium is the fifteenth largest contributor to the United Nations.

Let us have the courage and strength to agree to free humankind from wars and social injustices, and support its development. I invite all of us to spur our awareness. Let us demonstrate together our capacity to act.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Elio di Rupo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Cheick Modibo Diarra, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali.

The Honourable Cheick Modibo Diarra, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Cheick Modibo Diarra, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Diarra (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to pay well-deserved tribute to Chris Stevens and his colleagues, who died in Benghazi for the same ideals as those of our common Organization, the United Nations.

Next, I wish to convey the warm congratulations of the Malian delegation on the outstanding election of the new President of the General Assembly. That choice confirms the recognition, were such needed, of his qualities as a skilled diplomat. It is also a tribute to his country, Serbia, which maintains friendly and cooperative relations with my country. The President of the General Assembly can be assured of the Malian delegation's complete readiness to work with him for the full success of his mandate.

In the same spirit, I express my great appreciation to his distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for the excellent manner in which he led the work of the previous session. I also take this opportunity to pay warm tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his ongoing commitment to the ideals of the Organization.

The settlement of international disputes by peaceful means, which the President proposed as the central theme of the general debate, is timely, as it is a part of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, whose relevant provisions aim to limit hotbeds of tension through negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional arrangements or agreements, or through other peaceful means. The subject is quite current, in the light of the many crises and conflicts that seriously threaten international peace and security.

The settlement of disputes by peaceful means is particularly important for my country, Mali, as it is a country that is firmly attached to the ideals of peace and stability. Despite that, today it is undergoing one of the most difficult periods in its history. Its northern part has been occupied by armed groups consisting of fundamentalist terrorists, drug traffickers and criminals of every other sort. The most fundamental human rights are being violated continuously by a horde of heartless and lawless vandals.

The Government of Mali has just requested the International Criminal Court to consider those odious acts, which are no more and no less than war crimes and crimes against humanity. Whipping, amputation, summary execution, rape, stoning and looting and destruction of cultural and historical monuments and sites are the daily lot of the afflicted and helpless people of northern Mali.

That sad situation led the interim President of the Republic of Mali to request, on 1 September, the Economic Community of West African States for assistance in recovering the occupied territories and fighting terrorism. Similar requests have been made to the Security Council through the Secretary-General, as well as to the French Republic, the United States of America, the African Union and the European Union.

However, I would like to firmly emphasize that a lasting solution to the situation in the Sahel requires stronger and more dynamic cooperation among the States of the Sahel-Saharan region. In that vein, the Government of Mali remains in favour of the convening of a meeting of heads of State and Government of the Sahel region, with the support of the United Nations and other partners, in order to support and strengthen capacities and the arrangement for coordinating existing regional mechanisms.

In the specific case of our common area, the neighbouring countries of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger have set up mechanisms, such as the joint operational military staff committee based in Tamanrasset, Algeria, and others involving joint patrols and the right of pursuit. But we must recognize that those mechanisms need to be fully operational. In that regard, I would like to call for the support of the international community for their effective implementation.

My delegation would like to strongly emphasize that the aggression and occupation in the northern part of Mali is a major collateral consequence of the Libyan crisis, as indicated in the report of the joint United Nations/African Union mission to assess the impact of the Libyan crisis in the Sahel region (see S/2012/42).

The Security Council considered that report in January (see S/PV.6709).

The presence today of terrorist groups of various nationalities on our soil and in the Sahel region is a situation that should mobilize the entire international community to take joint, rapid and effective action, because that threat knows no bounds. Here I should like to reiterate the determination of the Government of Mali to continue the work that it has begun jointly with other core countries in the framework of the combat against terrorism, transnational organized crime and irredentist, subversive forces in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

In parallel with that approach, I should like to reaffirm the commitment undertaken by the interim President and the Government of Mali to negotiate with our compatriots who are not terrorists. I have said it before and I will say it again from this United Nations rostrum: we in Mali are not afraid or ashamed of negotiating, but we will not negotiate with terrorists. We are not prepared to negotiate issues that call into question the integrity of our territory and the secular nature of the country.

The situation in northern Mali due to the occupation has resulted in a deterioration in humanitarian conditions, which were already precarious owing to the flow of internally displaced persons and of people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Because of the crisis, more than 350,000 people have had to flee northern Mali, including 84,000 internally displaced persons and more than 268,000 others who are refugees in neighbouring countries. The crisis has also hampered access to education for more than 560,000 school-age children, 300,000 of whom were in school before the crisis began.

There has also been damage to educational facilities and equipment. In addition, 85 per cent of all teachers and 10,000 pupils have been displaced to the south, and 50,000 school-age children are now in neighbouring countries. Furthermore, schools have been occupied by flood-affected people in the south.

As the Assembly is aware, Mali is facing tremendous humanitarian needs in terms of housing, food, health, education and nutrition for refugees, displaced persons and wage earners. During his stay in the region, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees stated on 31 July 2012 that the crisis in Mali was "one of the most neglected humanitarian situations in the world". He said that from an appeal for $153 million, his Office had received only about $49 million to deal with that humanitarian crisis.

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Valerie Amos noted during her visit to Mali in August that $213 million was needed to deal with the humanitarian crisis that is currently affecting my country. That shows that the humanitarian situation is continuing to deteriorate, thus increasing the cost of intervention.

Here I would like to reiterate the gratitude of the people and the Government of Mali to all brotherly countries and all partners of goodwill for their hospitality in hosting our compatriots and for their generous contributions. I therefore call for a greater mobilization by all of Mali's partners and friends as well as the coordination of aid for Mali nationals who are displaced or refugees.

Our Government of National Unity was established on 20 August 2012, with the fundamental mission of quickly liberating the northern regions of the country and of holding democratic, transparent, just and credible elections. With a view to recovering territorial integrity, we are calling for the adoption by the Security Council of a resolution authorizing, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, intervention by an international military force so as to help the Malian army to retake and ensure the security of our national territory.

The Government of Mali would like to see the immediate arrival of such a force to support the defence and security forces of Mali in carrying out their noble mission of recovering and maintaining our territorial integrity and of protecting persons and property. The people of Mali continue to hope that the members of the Security Council will give due consideration to that request.

I should therefore like to take this opportunity to reiterate the gratitude of the people and the Government of Mali to the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and to the United Nations for their ongoing efforts to put a lasting end to the crisis in Mali, which also threatens the stability of the subregion and of Africa, and even beyond.

Our meetings are taking place at a time when developing countries are facing many major challenges, in particular the consequences of the economic and financial crisis, the burden of external debt and a decline in development assistance. There is therefore a need to undertake a more in-depth dialogue on new strategies aimed at mobilizing additional stable and predictable resources so as to ensure financing for development programmes and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular in the areas of health, education, food security and the environment.

Climate change is one of the major challenges facing the world. The very survival of our planet is threatened by natural disasters caused by that phenomenon, which is seriously affecting living conditions in countries of the Sahel such as mine through, inter alia, the inexorable advance of the desert; the silting of rivers, in particular the river Niger; ecosystem deterioration; floods; and problematic precipitation patterns.

I should like to highlight the need to find appropriate responses to this serious situation so as to avert tragic repercussions for sustainable development in the most vulnerable countries.

The United Nations has a pivotal role to play in the building of a new world order that is based on justice, solidarity and sustainable development. In order to tackle current and future challenges, it is important that the current mode of functioning of the United Nations be reviewed so as to take into account the new configuration of the world, which is fundamentally different from that which prevailed at the time of its founding. Such a review should, inter alia, make it possible to correct the historical imbalance that results in the continued exclusion of Africa from the limited circle of the countries that are permanent members of the Security Council.

To conclude, I hope that all present will agree with me that the situation in Mali is a manifestation of security problems in the Sahel and that it should be dealt with comprehensively through the appropriate United Nations mechanisms. It is therefore urgent to act, first of all to put an end to the suffering of the people of Mali, and secondly to prevent the development of a similar or worse situation for other peoples in the Sahel, or even the rest of the world.

It is also urgent to act because criminal and terrorist activities in northern Mali and the security risks that they pose for the entire subregion are in the long term a serious threat to the rest of the world.

Finally, it is urgent to act so as to resume cooperation with our bilateral and multilateral partners so as to consolidate a republic based on secular and democratic values.

Today my people are seriously affected. But Malians have not lost hope, because they are convinced of the support of other nations, whose leaders and respresentatives are here. Malians in both the north and the south legitimately await their active solidarity to emerge from the crisis. My people are convinced that their appeal for international solidarity will be heard and followed up with appropriate measures. Malians know that nations have the means. They look forward to decisive and diligent action. At stake is the stability and security of our subregion, of Africa and of the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Cheick Modibo Diarra, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Bazoum, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Bazoum (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session on his election. I also wish to congratulate his country for that success, which allows him to manage the Organization during his term of office. I would also like to congratulate the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, whose term of office was a very busy one. Lastly, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the tireless work that he has undertaken through the programme he submitted for the next five years and through which he particularly focuses on sustainable development, peace, security and the participation of women and young people.

Sad reality shows us that some people, using the freedom of expression that is guaranteed in their own countries, have believed that that freedom includes the right to publish cartoons and to produce a video that insults Islam. Those acts are comparable to anti-Semitic acts or racist acts in general by those who reject any differences and insist on making that a rule of conduct. We firmly condemn those actions, which are hurtful and offensive for Muslims. But however disgraceful they may be, they cannot justify the outbreak of violence we have seen, especially those against diplomatic missions. In particular, we condemn the murderous attack against the United States diplomatic mission in Benghazi, and we repeat here the sincere condolences of the people and Government of the Niger to the American people and Government. We reassert that Islam, a religion of balance and moderation, cannot provide a basis for such hateful responses. Those who, in the name of Islam, are behaving like savage hordes discredit this great religion and, in doing so, are behaving exactly like those they claim to denounce.

The sad facts that I have just referred to demonstrate the wisdom of the theme the President chose to place at the centre of his mandate, that is, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". The peaceful settlement of disputes, we may recall, was the theme of the general debate at the sixty-sixth session. Between the two sessions, the position of my country on the issue has not changed.

At the sixty-sixth session, my country's President, Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, said from this rostrum: "We might have thought that the end of the Cold War would open the way to an age of full and lasting peace around the world" (*A/66/PV.20, p. 17*). Unfortunately, because there was no ability, or perhaps not even the will, to attack the evil at its roots, the hope for a world without conflict recedes like the horizon as one approaches it. The root of the evil is bad governance, politically and economically. The promises of liberty, equality and justice, of the rule of law and solidarity — promises that were made to people both globally and at the national level — have still not been upheld. The lack of any regulation of the global economy, the domination of banks, unfair trade and the growth of inequalities between and within nations are factors of disorder, crises and conflicts that disrupt world peace. The rise of terrorism and the increasingly strong probability of criminal forces controlling great areas will worsen tensions throughout the world.

Anticipating international conflicts and disputes is the best way to prevent them. As international economic competition can lead to war, the anticipation of crises should create specific conditions for global economic growth that benefits all. To do that, there should be mechanisms to regulate the global economy with the goal, among others, of ending the hegemony of financial capital and unfair trade. The end of the hegemony of financial capital should allow us to direct available financial resources towards investments in the real economy rather than towards speculation.

The end of unfair trade will allow countries that produce raw materials, such as the Niger, to draw greater benefit from them, particularly through the change that generates added value. If a country such as mine were able to get a fair price for its raw materials and to establish real control over their exploitation, then the Millennium Development Goals could be achieved by 2015. That is one of the ambitions of the programme for the renaissance of the Niger that President Issoufou presented.

On the basis of that programme, the Government has just drawn up an economic and social development plan for 2012 to 2015. For financing the programme, the Niger is organizing a donors' meeting to be held in Paris on 13 and 14 November. The 3N initiative — Nigeriens Nourishing Nigeriens — is an integral and important part of the plan. I take the opportunity here to invite all partners of the Niger, both bilateral and multilateral, both public and private, to take an active part.

Allow me also to take the opportunity to thank all those who have responded positively to the appeal that our President launched here on 23 September 2011 during his address to the Asembly at its sixty-sixth session, calling for assistance to the people of the Niger following that year's mediocre harvest. The mobilization of the people and the Government, as well as all our partners, enabled us to prevent the drought from leading to famine, while creating the conditions to prepare for the 2012-2013 harvest. The results are very promising despite the recent flooding in the country.

It is said that history has more imagination than do men, because events often escape the control of those who cause them. It is my hope that this saying will not apply to the Arab Spring, which has created turmoil from which we hope good will come. Allow me to recall the fact that at the Group of Eight Summit in Deauville on 26 May 2011, President Issoufou drew the attention of the Heads of State and Government present on the need for them not to lose sight of the foreseeable consequences of a Libyan conflict in the Sahel-Saharan region.

His fears were unfortunately confirmed with the outbreak of the rebellion in Mali on 17 January, triggered by elements from Libya and followed by the coup d'état of 22 March, which dealt democracy a severe blow while enabling the occupation of two thirds of Malian territory, not just by external forces, some of them from Libya, but also by terrorists and criminal organizations specializing in various types of trafficking, particularly drugs. In our view, the current situation in Mali constitutes a serious threat to the security and stability of the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as the countries in the thick of things.

The ambition of the jihadists who have subjugated northern Mali, destroying the patrimonial historic sites of Timbuktu, cutting off hands and forcing women to wear the burka, is to conquer the whole of West Africa and the Maghreb. Once they have achieved that goal, will they stop there? Of course not. They will immediately go on to attack Europe and the whole of the rest of the world. This is therefore a global threat, and the response should be global, too.

It must be immediate and unhesitating, because we know well that postponing a fight always puts one at a disadvantage. Therefore the international community, and the Security Council in particular, has a duty to take responsibility for the crisis in Mali without delay in order to restore a united, democratic and secular Mali. An operational concept for military intervention should be drawn up and adopted within the framework of a coalition that should include troops from ECOWAS member States as well as from the countries involved and from other African countries wishing to take part. Such an operation should receive the firm and determined support of the friends of Mali and Africa among the great Powers. It should be carried out through a Security Council resolution in a framework based on the current efforts of ECOWAS but better coordinated with and controlled by the African Union through its Peace and Security Council.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Titus Corlăţean, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania.

Mr. Corlăţean (Romania) (*spoke in French*): The current session of the General Assembly gives us a complete picture of today's world with all its challenges and opportunities. We can also glimpse various paths opening up before us to help us meet the needs of humankind and of nations.

I would like to focus on the three main areas of activity of the United Nations — peace and security; development; and human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In our approach we believe that the realities of the last decade have confirmed the profound and complex interdependence that exists between these areas. There is no peace and security without development and respect for human rights and democracy. Development is a catalyst for democracy and respect for human rights, and, at the same time, an essential factor for peace and security. In their turn, respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law strengthen development and create the conditions for lasting peace and security.

(*spoke in English*)

New situations of internal instability, civil strife and insecurity, with spillover effects, have arisen in the Middle East and other regions. It is regrettable that the new session of the Assembly is beginning in the shadow of the sorrow over the recent events in Benghazi. Attacks on diplomatic representatives are unacceptable for any reason. Diplomats are bridges between cultures, links among nations. Their inviolability is part of ancient custom. I strongly condemn the attacks and offer my sincere condolences to the families of the victims. The perpetrators must be brought to justice through a fair and equitable trial. At the same time, the ideals of democracy must be preserved. Stability and the rule of law should be the future pillars of society in Libya and elsewhere. We are firmly committed to supporting the efforts of the international community to consolidate stability and security, tolerance and religious understanding.

Throughout 2012 we have been confronted with the dire effects of the crisis in Syria, where human rights violations are now rampant. The Syrian Government must comply with its international commitments and obligations relating to human rights. Justice must be done in all cases of violations of human rights and all those who are guilty must be permitted a fair trial, even if it was not something they allowed their victims. Romania has stated throughout that it is imperative that the international community curb the escalating violence in Syria; and of course we favour a political solution.

In that regard, I would like to voice our firm support for the mission of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi in his new capacity as Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria. We were also a wholehearted supporter of the full implementation of the Joint Special Envoy's six-point plan for Syria and, similarly, gave full and direct support to the activitiees of the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. In that context, I would like to remind the Assembly that Romanian monitors were part of its structure. I strongly believe that the only future for Syria must be an inclusive one for all Syrians, irrespective of religion or ethnic group. Any other option would be nothing less than a nightmare.

The time has come for a more structured response on the part of the United Nations, based on a consensus approach by the Security Council. Obviously, we cannot and should not allow violence to prevail when people in Syria rely on our capacity to offer stability and predictability and when regional stability and security are at stake.

Recent developments in the area of peace and security, at both the global and regional levels, do not offer many reasons for optimism. The year 2012 has seen limited progress with the Middle East peace process. The expectations raised by the statement of the Quartet for the Middle East on 23 September 2011 will remain unfulfilled as long as direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are not resumed.

Romania is a strong supporter of all efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We support all the initiatives of the Quartet and the full implementation of the road map's vision of two States, Israeli and Palestinian, living side by side in peace and security. We are also concerned about the lack of progress in finding negotiated solutions to protracted conflicts in the Black Sea region, such as those in Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh and that in Georgia involving Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We must all keep our attention focused on these unsettled situations. Meanwhile, we express our satisfaction with the efforts carried out over the past 12 months by the special representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Over the past year, the Security Council reacted promptly to new crises by adopting resolutions aimed at preventing the escalation of conflict or calling for the re-establishment of constitutional order or for efforts by all the parties involved to find negotiated solutions to new problems. The resolutions adopted have not always met expectations. In spite of the fact that the mandates of several United Nations peacekeeping missions were extended, little progress was made.

Under the auspices of the United Nations, through a joint innovative and intellectual effort, the conceptual approach has been enlarged to include human security, the responsibility to protect, and mediation. There is still a long way to go before those concepts are operational. When the time comes, Romania stands ready to implement them.

New categories of participants must be included in our common endeavour. Beside Governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, parliaments and local communities are already acting to identify optimal solutions. Based on my previous experience as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate, I consider that the role of parliaments as elected bodies could be increased in prevention activities or in efforts to settle existing conflicts. In that respect, cooperation and interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in peacebuilding efforts is highly relevant.

Over the past 15 years, my country has taken a keen interest in, and offered important contributions to, civilian and military missions under United Nations mandates. Today Romania is honoured and proud to have contributed in a consistent way to various United Nations operations. I pay my deepest respect to the men and women of Romania who have lost or risked their lives in conflict areas, as well as to all the military, police, gendarmes and civilian personnel serving all over the world to bring peace and security under the flag of the United Nations.

As I have already mentioned, development is equally a major area of interest, action and cooperation within the United Nations. One area where we could find solutions within the United Nations framework is improving the functioning of the banking and financial systems and institutions. National and international banking and financial institutions should become ever greater partners for Governments — a part of the solution to the economic crises confronting countries and regions.

Young people are the future of our nations and of our world. The United Nations has, in the past, takem up the problems facing younger generations, including through programmes of action adopted by the General Assembly. The time has come to revisit this area of interest to assess the achievements as well as the steps to be taken in order to meet the current expectations and needs of youth.

We should reconsider from a broader perspective the vital role of the education sector in providing support, especially but not exclusively, to young people. Such support should include universal access for younger generations to education; professional training allowing rapid and efficient integration into the labour market; and participation in, and contribution to, the shaping of future societies in all the countries, especially in those in transition.

For many years now, water has been a major concern as climate change affects its availability in all regions. Water, our planet's most precious resource, must not be allowed to become our most disputed resource and a source of bitter conflict.

Our attention should be focused on the follow-up to and implementation of the decisions recently adopted by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Relevant resolutions on enhancement of the institutional framework for sustainable development, agreement on sustainable development goals, and determination of certain financial aspects of the achievement of those goals are expected by all of us.

(*spoke in French*)

I should like to share some thoughts relating to the area of human rights, which is of growing relevance for our cooperation in the framework of the United Nations. International cooperation and discussions promoting human rights received renewed momentum with the establishment of the Human Rights Council. As an elected member of the Council since it began its work, Romania has contributed to the development and adoption of its working methods, based on a more analytical approach as well as on in-depth cooperation and interactive dialogue with Member States. The main objective of the Romanian presidency of the Human Rights Council in 2007 was to strengthen and more actively promote human rights at the global level. We believe that the universal periodic review is an appropriate instrument for implementing the international protection of human rights in all its aspects. It can also respond to new human rights challenges, such as those posed by the Internet.

This spring in Geneva, Romania, together with Morocco, Norway, Peru, Qatar and Tunisia, promoted a draft resolution entitled "Human rights, democracy and the rule of law", which was sponsored by 124 countries from all regional groups. The broad support for the resolution, and the large number of Member States that supported its adoption by the Council, confirms the interest of Member States in this subject. We saw a broad recognition of the close interlinkage of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. We would like to see in the near future the same approach taken by the General Assembly in the form of a similar resolution. In that respect, Romania is ready to set to work and to act together with other interested Member States.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm my country's commitment to the principles and values promoted and constantly enhanced by the United Nations. We recognize that there is no alternative to the framework of cooperation offered by the United Nations system, which aims to resolve the complex and interrelated problems of our day. Reforming and adapting the system to the new realities of the world depends entirely upon us as Member States. It depends on our political will as political leaders. By doing so, we will meet the expectations of our peoples.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Daniel Kablan Duncan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Duncan (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, who was not able to be here today, wishes me to express, on behalf of the people and Government of Côte d'Ivoire, the warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would like to assure Mr.Jeremić of the full support of the Ivorian delegation for the success of his mandate. I would also like to convey to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, my delegation's satisfaction with the work undertaken and the encouraging results achieved under his presidency. His commitment to our common cause has allowed the Organization to fully play the role conferred upon it by the United Nations Charter. I wish to reiterate to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon my sincere thanks for his determined commitment and for his persistent quest for peace throughout the world. I reiterate to him once again the infinite gratitude of my President and the entire nation for his unfailing commitment to Côte d'Ivoire. Through the Secretary-General, I would like to pay tribute to all the civil and military personnel of the United Nations for their tireless efforts on behalf of peace and security.

The theme chosen for this session, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", follows on from the theme of the previous session. In particular, it reflects the essence of the ideals of the San Francisco Conference, which led to the birth of the Organization. The purposes ascribed to the United Nations in its Charter can be summarized by the triptych of peace, liberty and development. To achieve those Charter purposes, the founding fathers of the Organization established a system of collective security on the basis of two major principles: the prohibition of recourse to the use of force in international relations and the obligation to settle disputes peacefully.

Now more than ever, we must enhance our collective security system and ensure that it has all the necessary resources to be effective. For his part, the President of Côte d'Ivoire is committed to strictly following a policy of peace and dialogue. These are principles that were enshrined as cardinal virtues, through trial by fire, by the late President, Mr. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who won a place in the history of Côte d'Ivoire, and indeed of the African continent, through his pragmatic approach to the settlement of conflict through dialogue.

For that reason, President Allassane Ouattara spares no efforts in seeking lasting solutions, both nationally in the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, and regionally, especially with regard to the situations in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. Indeed, the security of West Africa is seriously challenged by military and political crises orchestrated by military, rebel or terrorist movements, particularly in Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which has always promoted the path of negotiation highlighted by the theme of this session, is working tirelessly to ensure a positive outcome to those crises and to ensure the restoration of constitutional order and democracy in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. While the situation has considerably improved in Guinea-Bissau, the one in Mali continues to be of major concern. Rebel movements linked to terrorist networks continue to occupy the main towns in the north of that country, which they are now pillaging and destroying with total impunity.

Determined to put an end to this abusive occupation of the north of Mali, ECOWAS plans to deploy a military force at the request of the Government of Mali to help the Malian army efficiently fulfil its sovereign mission of defending the territorial integrity of the country. The establishment and deployment of such a force requires major support from the African Union, the United Nations and all development partners. Indeed, the presence of groups with links to terrorists in northern Mali is a genuine threat, which could lead, if nothing is done, to the implosion of the entire West African region and the Sahel.

When we look at the non-State players involved in the current conflicts in Guinea-Bissau and Mali, particularly the terrorist networks and armed groups linked to transnational crime and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, we note how incomplete the current instruments for resolving these crises are, based as they are on negotiation and mediation. Today, there is no questioning the fact that the resurgence of terrorism in the Sahel region in general and in northern Mali in particular has created a sanctuary, a lawless zone. Western Africa faces other dangerous threats to the security of not only the region itself but also other regions, perhaps even Europe.

Eradicating these problems requires concerted and diligent action by ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations. I am pleased to note the creation of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, which is financed and hosted by Saudi Arabia. I also welcome the proposal made by the Secretary-General to appoint a United Nations counter-terrorism coordinator, and I would like to assure him of Côte d'Ivoire's full support.

Transnational crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the destruction of the environment are threats to the world in general and to Africa in particular. The International Maritime Organization, in its 2010 annual report, quite rightly said that the West African coast is one of the six main centres of piracy in the world. Responsibility for the measures to be taken to deal with these scourges lies first and foremost with the States of the subregion and the principal subregional organizations.

In that regard, I welcome the fact that the forty-first ECOWAS Summit, held in Yamoussoukro on 28 and 29 June, decided to convene a joint summit of West African and Central African States to take joint measures on piracy and organized transnational crime in the Gulf of Guinea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2039 (2012).

However, despite the goodwill of the countries of the subregion, they cannot, on their own, deal with the threats facing maritime security. My country welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to facilitate the organization of a summit of heads of State of the region to enable them to draw up a regional strategy to combat maritime piracy, together with the African Union.

Côte d'Ivoire, like many other African and non-African States, sincerely hopes that the Organization will be able to adopt in the near future a legally binding arms trade treaty, following the efforts made by all parties to reach a consensus. The international community must not lose the historic opportunity it has to better regulate, if not outright prohibit, a trade that causes 500,000 deaths each year and that is the main cause of violations of human rights and the destabilization of our States, as well as worsening conditions for our people, and, above all, poses a constant threat to regional and international peace and security. With respect to the links between economic development and the environment, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in June in Rio de Janeiro, shows what we can accomplish when we work together to build a better world for current generations and those to come. The combined crises in food, energy and the environment threaten the peace and security of all humankind. Yet we have the means to achieve a world free of famine and hunger. It is within our capabilities.

Allow me to stress that, with respect to the international system, Côte d'Ivoire urges all delegations, as we take up the eighth round of intergovernmental negotiations concerning the reform of the Security Council, to show flexibility and a spirit of compromise.

It is important to act quickly, because the composition of the Council is the keystone of our collective security system, and in that light its composition should be designed to maximize efficiency.

In order for the Security Council to be truly effective in its decisions, since it devotes two-thirds of its time to the African continent, we consider it more critical than ever for Africa to hold a permanent seat with the right of veto, in accordance with the recommendations defined in the Ezulwini Consensus. Taking duly into account the wishes of African heads of State and Government, the reform of the Security Council could represent a historical opportunity that the international community should seize in order to repair an anomaly in international relations. With that in mind, I hope that the forthcoming negotiations on Security Council reform will be crowned with success, yielding a Council that truly represents the realities of our shared history and our contemporary world.

I would like now to make some remarks about the situation in my country. Thanks to the most valuable support of the international community, especially the United Nations, Côte d'Ivoire has emerged from the military and political crisis that rocked the foundations of its economic and social development for nearly a decade. Resolutely committed to the path of post-conflict reconstruction, and with the aim of national cohesion, Côte d'Ivoire has made considerable progress in the political, economic, social, security and humanitarian spheres since 21 May 2011, the official date on which President Ouattara assumed the presidency of the Republic. Those results were made possible by the determination of the Ivorian Government to implement the three central priorities defined by the President when he took office.

First, on security and stability, significant joint efforts by the Government and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire lead to improvements in the situation, even in the west of the country, which has been the most problematic area.

Secondly, national reconciliation has been effected through the National Commission for Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation, which has been serving as the standing body for maintaining political dialogue.

Reconstruction and economic renewal are already off to a good start, with an estimated growth of more than 8 per cent in the gross national product for 2012. The economic situation has greatly improved, thanks to the support of our development partners, especially after we met the goals of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in June.

The resulting drop in our foreign debt and the adoption of our national development plan for the period 2012-2015 allow Côte d'Ivoire to hope that we can reach the double-digit economic growth rate necessary for our country to become an emerging country by 2020, as envisioned by President Ouattara.

Before concluding, I would like to say that Côte d'Ivoire notes that the President of the General Assembly at the previous session opened an informal interactive dialogue, at the level of the United Nations, on the issue of the responsibility to protect. In the aftermath of that useful forum and in the light of the lessons learned, Côte d'Ivoire, following the example of the Secretary-General, believes that the principle of the responsibility to protect has achieved sufficient maturity and that what remains to be done now is to implement it.

On that basis, the Economic Community of West African States and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect jointly held a regional forum in Abuja devoted to that concept. A similar meeting is scheduled to take place in Côte d'Ivoire at the end of this year.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the gratitude of President Ouattara, his Government and the Ivorian people to the United Nations and the entire international community for their commitment to peace and stability in Côte d'Ivoire. That constitutes to be the precondition for development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo, Minister for External Relations of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Moukoko Mbonjo (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): I speak on behalf of Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, who has had to remain in Cameroon owing to painful circumstances. He asked me to read the following statement.

> "Allow me, first of all, to warmly congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. The experience he brings as former head of the diplomatic corps of his country leads me to believe that he, like his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, will lead the discussions with the requisite agility and talent. I would also like to

express to Mr. Al-Nasser my country's appreciation for his action as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.

"Finally, I would like thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his devotion to serving the ideals of the Organization.

"This has been an active year for the Organization. We have held major meetings to discuss the important questions of the day and examined the most appropriate course of action to address them. Allow me to return to two of them.

"First of all, there is Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in June 2012 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the historic Earth Summit. The meeting enabled us to define the future we want to leave our children.

"I am pleased that the vision adopted at the end of the meeting recognizes the need to further incorporate at all levels of activities the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. If we want to leave a liveable world to future generations, the green economy seems the most effective way of ensuring that development meets the needs of populations while at the same time preserving the environment.

"For our part, Cameroon has already begun actions in that respect. We intend to work further to preserve our natural capital and to seek low-carbon solutions, as well as to promote production and consumption patterns that are sustainable.

"In our view, progress towards the green economy must be gradual and enjoy the support of the international community. In that respect, the document adopted at the end of the Rio Conference committed the international community to upholding the many obligations that had been undertaken with respect to Africa in terms of sustainable development, while ensuring, inter alia, appropriate technology transfer. The international financial institutions and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) are called upon to strengthen their activities to that end. That is a significant step forward.

"The second important meeting that we should note is the thirteenth quadrennial session held by UNCTAD in Doha, Qatar. Less commented upon by the media than the Rio meeting, that session aimed to curb the excesses of globalization and to refocus it on development. Globalization, because of what it has brought to the development of trade, economic and technological progress and the rapprochement of cultures, can be considered a positive phenomenon. The fact remains, however, that because of poor management and poor regulation, it was unable to prevent economic crises and relegated problems of underdevelopment to the backburner. UNCTAD, after the Doha meeting, was reinforced in its role in terms of trade and development, which is something to be welcomed.

"Since 2008, we have seen a slowdown in global economic activity. Industrialized countries, be they European Union or the United States or Japan, have, to varying degrees, been experiencing serious difficulties — slower growth or even recession, increased debt and public deficits, imbalances in foreign trade, and so on. Emerging countries themselves, which had seen high growth rates, have been experiencing a slowdown as well. As to developing countries, even if they continue to make moderate progress, they fear the effects of a crash of the global economy and a possible contagion.

"A few moments ago I said that globalization, even if it does have some positive aspects, has not achieved its main objective, that is, ensuring the harmonious functioning of the global economy and global finance while taking into account the interests of all concerned parties. That relative failure has revealed an urgent need for regulation. Right now it is hard to see how and when that need can be met.

"Major forums, such as the Group of 20, of which industrialized countries make up the majority, and the World Trade Organization have, for their part, discussed several times the question of the global economy and outlined solutions that could re-establish an overall balance. But it has to be said that, given the scale of the task, the lack of available resources and the difficulties that major countries themselves are having to face, the discussions have not always been followed by action. From that standpoint, the international community seems to be going through a period of doubt and concern. Every one of us is aware that urgent and large-scale action is required, but, preoccupied with our own problems, we seem to be in a state of paralysis and unable to take the decisions that need to be taken.

"The obvious risk is one of a return to protectionism — a temptation that is already evident. If we believe the signs, that could only bring temporary respite and in time could exacerbate the recession. African countries, and Cameroon in particular, which have undergone a long crisis marked by declines in gross domestic product, the harsh discipline of structural adjustment plans and the worsening of social hardship, are in a good position to evaluate the consequences of a deterioration of the economy. That is why they place their hopes in a broad consultation with a view to the comprehensive regulation of economic and financial flows that would take into account the situation of the different categories of countries and provide opportunities for international solidarity to play a role.

"For its part, Cameroon has drawn lessons from the current situation. Back on its feet, thanks to the sacrifices of its population and relieved of the weight of their debt by external partners, the economy of Cameroon is now focused on taking advantage of its natural resources. Well endowed by nature, my country intends to develop modern agriculture in order to consolidate its food self-sufficiency and encourage exports. Also, aware that its industrialization requires the availability of sufficient energy, we have set in motion a programme to exploit our vast hydroelectric potential. Finally, several mining projects, together with the building of adequate road transport and port infrastructure, are under way. We hope to make progress on the road to development and the improvement of the living conditions of our population.

"I would now like to express my appreciation for the President's choice of theme for the general debate, namely, 'Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means'. That subject follows on from last year's theme and enables us to revisit the Charter of the United Nations and to remind ourselves of the values that it promotes and that should guide our actions.

"The theme recalls recalls the fundamental principles of the Organization, which are, inter alia, the maintenance of international peace and security through the adoption of effective collective measures and the settlement by peaceful means of disputes which could lead to a breakdown of peace, in accordance with the principles of justice and international law. That reminder is not without value at the present moment, when tensions persist in the Sahel, especially in Mali, when the Sudan and South Sudan struggle to normalize relations, and when Syria is ravaged by internal conflict. Those tensions highlight the risk of force being used to resolve differences.

"The use of force can be justified in some cases, such as to respond to international terrorism, violations of human rights and democracy, threats to the security of persons or violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. However, it is clear that, before resorting to that extreme, peaceful means must first be used to resolve disputes, so as to avoid setting off a vicious circle of violence and retaliation. Far be it from me to indulge in utopianism. There are situations when military intervention is perhaps inevitable. But it is our responsibility to reduce to the minimum the likelihood of military action by taking a maximum of precautions. In any case, clearly the preferred way to settle disputes is still through prevention and negotiation.

"For the greater part of international public opinion, the United Nations embodies the noblest human values and the hope for a future in keeping with the ideals of peace, security and development, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Let us strive to keep that hope from being yet again betrayed."

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Antoine Gambi, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Gambi (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): It is a genuine honour and pleasure for me to take the floor in the General Assembly Hall to report on the great interest that the Central African Republic takes in the major international issues of concern to everyone here.

However, before doing so, I would like, on behalf of my whole delegation, to extend my warm congratulations to Mr. Jeremić on his election to the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to assure him of our full cooperation in his noble and demanding work. I would also like to commend the excellent work done under the presidency of Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser during the sixty-sixth session. I wholeheartedly express my deepest thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the particular attention he focuses on our post-conflict country, where the quest to achieve and build peace remains a major challenge on the road to reconstruction and development. I also commend his tireless efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations and to consolidate ever more firmly the moral authority of the Organization.

Before conveying our assessments and perspectives on the main recurring themes of the general debate, which constitute a litany of global concerns, let me first say that my country welcomes the initiative in convening at the outset of the current session the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels. That is an issue of critical importance, considering that the rule of law itself is being harshly put to the test all over the world. All States and all international institutions should strive to promote the rule of law at both the national and the international levels. Strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions is of the utmost importance, because they represent the guardians of sovereignty and peaceful coexistence.

The real battle at the national and international levels is to enforce respect for the rule of law wherever chaos prevails. Many challenges remain in maintaining the rule of law. Hotspots persist and old conflicts erupt anew in many parts of the world, causing tragedy and threatening to unravel the rule of law.

In Africa the rule of law is particularly at risk of breaking down, threatened by tensions, disputes and conflicts in a number of high-tension areas, especially Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia. The same applies to other crises all over the world, carrying untold risk to governance and stability within countries, not to mention to international relations.

The Government of the Central African Republic goes to great lengths to support efforts to promote the rule of law, justice and transparency through its management of the national institutions charged with enforcing the rule of law. Without peace and stability at the global and regional levels, national security and stability are out of the question, and therefore so is the rule of law.

All around the globe we hear cries for freedom and democracy. Since 1989 the world has been in a period of change that has sparked much political fire in Africa.

With the international transformations of the 1990s, many African States, including the Central African Republic, have begun to move towards democratizing their political systems. Democracy, good governance and human rights are interdependent. We can say that there can be no rule of law unless those values are respected, both by Governments and the governed. The support and programmes designed to respond to citizen's expectations must take those shared values into account, and the Government of the Central African Republic strives to achieve that every day. The Central African Republic has returned to democratic practices, and there is no question that through the evolving democratic process efforts have been made to improve the management of public affairs politically, economically and socially. But we must admit that much remains to be done, and it is something that the international community must commit to collectively.

My country's commitment to human rights has been demonstrated, not only through its full accession to many if not almost all, of the relevant international and regional instruments, but also in practice, through its encouragement of those rights. Under the leadership of General François Bozizé, President of the Republic and Head of State, we adopted a new Constitution on 27 December 2004. The Constitution enshrines the principles of good governance, maintains the rule of law and respect for human rights, and broadens the scope of individual and collective liberties. The Constitution also provides for recognition of the principle that international conventions ratified by the Central African Republic take precedence over national legislation, thus encouraging the harmonization of our laws with our international commitments.

In expressing its political will within the framework of the defence of civic and political rights protected by the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights, the Central African Republic implements the provisions of that Charter, which have been incorporated into its laws. The Government is also making efforts to protect and encourage vulnerable groups, such as women and children and minorities, through social policies that benefit them.

We are aware that the press is the fourth estate in every democracy. In order to guarantee the exercise of the freedom of the press in the Central African Republic, the Government enacted, on 22 February 2005, Ordinance No. 05002, concerning freedom of communication, which relaxes the laws concerning press offences, notably by replacing prison terms with ordinary fines for any contravention of the laws in question.

In an effort to avoid post-electoral political crises, the Government, the political parties — both the majority and the opposition parties — trade unions and civil society are currently reviewing the electoral code in order to correct dysfunctional areas that were noted during the election campaigns of January 2011. The work being done will enable Central African political actors to undertake reforms and essential improvements for the next electoral cycle in a spirit of dialogue and consensus.

The state of the world should make us aware of the urgent need to strengthen multilateralism in order to avoid the collective disaster we face, if we do not speedily come up with appropriate and agreed-on solutions to our global problems. The fundamental goals of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continue to be held hostage to the policy of the double standard, along with the discriminatory practices and lack of respect for commitments undertaken on the part of certain nuclear Powers.

The fight against terrorism and violations of human rights around the world, which is approached selectively, and the biased implementation of international humanitarian law has given rise to legitimate doubts as to whether those noble causes are being exploited for political ends. That calls for action by the Organization. Issues of climate change and the protection of the natural world also demand a changed approach that takes into account the aspirations of all peoples. Floods and energy and drought-induced food crises continue in some parts of the world, and such crucial issues require greater mobilization on the part of the international community.

This year we will renew the debate on the central role of the United Nations system, while putting particular emphasis on the global governance that it embodies. The Organization remains the keystone of the new world order and the conscience of humankind. That is why the need is greater than ever for a United Nations that can take on a more leading role in that global governance, a groundbreaking organization that will be at the forefront of actions promoting an inclusive framework and global and lasting solutions to all the crises that trouble our world and have direct repercussions for human rights.

Increasing multipolarization and economic globalization, the recent evolution of world economic governance and growing cooperation between emerging countries have all presented valuable development opportunities to many countries around the world. The United Nations is the most universal and representative intergovernmental organization with the greatest authority, and it is the most important platform for achieving multilateralism. Since its establishment it has played a huge and irreplaceable role in maintaining world peace, promoting shared development and strengthening international cooperation. In today's world its role must be reinforced, not weakened.

The Central African Republic will continue to support the essential and rational reform of the United Nations in line with the evolution of the international situation, in order to increase its authority and effectiveness, strengthen its capacity to deal with new threats and challenges and better implement the mandates entrusted to it by the Charter. Both the revitalization of the General Assembly and the necessary reform of the Security Council in order to meet the legitimate aspirations of developing countries, in particular in Africa, are certainly valid.

The issue of civilian resources needed in post-conflict situations takes us back to the Organization's initial purpose: to be a centre for the coordinated efforts of nations to maintain international peace and security through peaceful means. The Charter has given rise to two texts on the peaceful settlement of disputes: the General Assembly Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes of 1982 (resolution 37/10, annex) and the 1988 Declaration on the Prevention and Removal of Disputes and Situations Which May Threaten International Peace and Security and on the Role of the United Nations in this Field (resolution 43/51, annex). We could also mention resolution 47/120, entitled "An Agenda for Peace", drawn up following the summit meeting of the Security Council in January 1992 convened to establish a doctrine of preventive diplomacy in order to anticipate crises or to facilitate their settlement through the mechanisms of good offices, mediators and special envoys of the Secretary-General supported by the Mediation Support Unit.

In that context, the Government of the Central African Republic welcomes the African Union's launching of the African Solidarity Initiative in July. Its aim is to mobilize contributions of all kinds in support of the various reconstruction phases in African countries emerging from conflict. Post-conflict reconstruction is complex and requires short-, medium- and long-term programmes to prevent violence from escalating and the reoccurrence of violent conflict and to strengthen and consolidate a lasting peace.

Under the presidency of President Bozizé, the Central African Republic, a post-conflict country that owes much to the virtues of dialogue, quickly noted the significance of such a tool in the prevention and settlement of national crises. In that regard, I would like to draw the international community's attention to the fact that the Central African Government has made the issue of mediation a priority concern in its work plan. To that end, it established the National Mediation Council.

We should perhaps go further in establishing civilian mediation bodies for the restoration of peace, whose members would be charged with visiting the warring parties in order to establish dialogue between them and to help them to settle their disputes through peaceful means.

The Central African Republic affirms that there can be no rule of law without respect for and the promotion of rights and freedoms, including that of religion, which should be practiced without extremism, the consequences of which often lead to a clash of civilizations. Regional and international meetings have taken place in the context of the dialogue of civilizations. However, violence and intolerance continue to affect social relations.

This is the place to express to the American people the sincere condolences of the Central African Government over the attacks on the United States consulate in Benghazi, which led to the death of innocent victims.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I now call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who wishes to speak in exercise the right of reply.

I would like to remind members of the General Assembly that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Sahraei (Islamic Republic of Iran): This morning, the Prime Minister of the friendly State of Kuwait referred in his statement to the three Iranian islands located in the Persian Gulf. In that regard, I would like to state the following.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its full sovereignty over the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf and categorically rejects any claim to the contrary. The Islamic Republic of Iran underlines that measures taken by Iranian officials regarding those islands have always been conducted on the basis of the principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

My country has always pursued a policy of friendship and good-neighbourliness with all neighbouring countries. In that context, Iran stands ready to discuss the issue bilaterally with the relevant officials in the United Arab Emirates with a view to strengthening relations in various fields and, accordingly, to resolve any possible misunderstanding by the other party. As has been regularly reiterated, the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iran regarding those islands are not negotiable.

In relation to the references made in the statements of a few delegations, the Islamic Republic of Iran wishes to stress that the only correct and historically and universally recognized name for the sea between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula is the Persian Gulf. Any use of fabricated or incomplete names for that body of water is therefore completely groundless and absolutely unacceptable and bears no legal, geographical or political value.

The meeting rose at 10.40 p.m.

United Nations

A/67/PV.12

General Assembly

Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting

Thursday, 27 September 2012, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.15 a.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Izetbegović: I would like to congratulate President Jeremić on his election and to thank Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for having successfully presided over the General Assembly at its previous session.

I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for having visited my country this past July. As we are marking the twentieth anniversary of our admission to the United Nations, his visit came as a recognition of the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina has travelled a long way since joining the Organization, having transformed itself from a recipient of security assistance into a contributor to global peace and security.

I also want to commend the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to advance dialogue and cooperation, and for his firm commitment to the core values and principles of the United Nations. We in Bosnia and Herzegovina recognize the importance of, and fully support, his action agenda, which identified five generational imperatives: prevention, a more secure world, helping countries in transition, empowering women and youth, and sustainable development.

Today's world is the scene of unfolding crises and mounting global challenges. The first and foremost of these is the disaster in Syria. As we stand here, our fellow Syrians are fighting against a brutal regime. They are fighting to take their destiny into their own hands. The regime of Bashar Al-Assad is answering their yearning for freedom and democracy with guns and bombs, just as his father's regime did 30 years ago. That is revolting and morally reprehensible — but so is our collective failure to stop it.

Once again, we are idly standing by while a human tragedy of dramatic proportions is unfolding before our eyes. We should do our part to help the Syrian people's historic stand for freedom. We should do our part to save the people of Syria from tyranny. We should, but we are not.

The images coming from Syria remind us of the tragedy of Bosnia. We in Bosnia and Herzegovina feel the pain of the Syrian people as our own because we went through the same horrors not that long ago. When Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Srebrenica

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with me this July to pay his respects to the genocide victims, he said:

> "The international community must be united not to see any further bloodshed in Syria because I do not want to see any of my successors, after 20 years, visiting Syria, apologizing for what we could have done to protect the civilians in Syria — which we are not doing now".

His predecessor, Kofi Annan, stated in the report on the fall of Srebrenica:

> "Through error, misjudgment and an inability to recognize the scope of the evil confronting us, we failed to do our part to help save the people of Srebrenica ... The tragedy of Srebrenica will haunt our history forever" (*A/54/549, para. 503*)

Today, those words about the Organization's failure to respond to the tragedy in Syria ring true.

The best way to honour the victims of the Srebrenica genocide would have been to learn the lessons of that failure and never commit the same errors again. Sadly, the United Nations, especially the Security Council, has failed to do that. The international community has chosen yet again to repeat the trial-and-error pattern of the policies that failed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The resolutions, statements of concern, ineffective sanctions, observers, and missions with no mandate to protect civilians are actions that have deadly consequences, as demonstrated in my country.

Make no mistake. Unless we act now, and act decisively, to help the people of Syria and put an end to the bloodshed there, that tragedy will haunt our history forever, just like Srebrenica.

Developments at the beginning of the twenty-first century defy rational prediction. Indeed, who could have predicted such an explosion of freedom in the Middle East? In the last few years, we have witnessed a historic awakening in the Arab world. Profound social and political changes aimed at creating democratic societies are under way now — changes that have been fermenting for decades. They are the best confirmation that Muslims strive vigorously for freedom, dignity and human rights. A well-educated, free-thinking generation of young Arabs has finally broken the chains of dictatorship. No force can prevent that new generation from taking charge of its destiny.

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Bosnia and Herzegovina strongly supported the Arab peoples' aspirations for greater freedom and democracy. We acted to ensure that the international community supported those who wanted free societies instead of closed ones, the rule of law instead of the rule of one individual, democracy instead of dictatorship, justice and fairness instead of oppression and corruption.

The stalemate in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also deeply troubling. The peace process is not moving forward, and the chain of violence has not been broken. A new impetus to negotiations is urgently needed, because there is no alternative to a negotiated solution. The Palestinians have every right — historical, moral and legal — to a State of their own, but Israel has every right to its security. The occupation of Palestinian territories must end, but so must the terror and violence. All attempts to create new realities on the ground in the hope that they will be accepted as a starting point for future negotiations must be rejected. The continuation of settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories continues to pose the most serious obstacle to peace. Israel should immediately end all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, because those activities are illegal under international law. Doing so is in Israel's own best interest if it truly desires peace with the Palestinians.

The state of affairs of 60 or 6,000 years ago is not the right point of reference. The right point of reference for a solution is the principle of the peaceful coexistence of two sovereign States — an independent Palestine and a secure Israel. That is the only realistic way to bring about a just resolution to the conflict and to ensure stability and progress in the Middle East. To achieve such a solution, a more sincere attempt at good-faith negotiations is needed, especially on the part of Israel. The road to peace does not include ignoring United Nations resolutions, squeezing the Palestinians onto bits and pieces of the land that once belonged to their fathers, and building settlements on those remaining bits of land.

The Organization needs to send a strong message demanding that its resolutions be respected and that there be no double standards or chosen peoples when it comes to the application of international legal norms and human rights principles.

Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed disturbing violence linked to intolerance. The video that sparked those developments is deeply insulting. It deserves the strongest condemnation, and we absolutely reject its content and message. There is no justification, however, for responding to that movie with violence. Violence in response to speech is unacceptable. There can be no debate about that. Violence is no way to honour religion. Responding to bigotry with violence only further fans the flames of intolerance. We must draw the line at violence, but we must also find a way to prevent hate speech and bigotry. Yes, there is the right to free speech, but there is also the right to dignity.

We cannot impose our ideology or our religion on anyone else. We must promote tolerance, but we must also promote mutual respect. That is why, as responsible leaders, we should have a frank debate about the outer limits of free expression when that freedom is abused to incite hate and deliberately slander the dignity of others.

There is no inherent contradiction between Islamic and Western values. On the contrary, those values are compatible. After all, they are derived from the same sources. Throughout history, interactions between those values have led to tremendous achievements. There need be no clash. There are only those who need to create a false perception of a clash in order to come to power or maintain their hold on it.

So many societies in today's world are in transition, yearning to find a balance between traditional and modern values. The relationship between the West and the Islamic world and between their respective value systems is going to be one of the most critical issues of our time. That relationship will go through crises and periods of misunderstanding and intolerance. In the modern age, we need to continue to seek a formula, which is to say a model, for how to reconcile Islamic and Western values, East and West. No matter how hard it may be, finding that formula is going to be essential in the time ahead of us.

The human condition is one of diversity. Our human race is a mosaic composed of a rich variety of peoples, cultures and religions that shine together in a dynamic, sparkling pattern. Our responsibility is to nurture and protect that mosaic.

I come from a country whose historical experience can offer valuable lessons in finding a model for peaceful coexistence within such diversity. The whole world can benefit from the lessons that my country has learned from constantly seeking to improve its understanding and management of diversity. For hundreds of years, its citizens lived in harmony, helping each other build houses of worship that are physically almost leaning on each other. The westernmost range of Orthodox Christianity and Islam, the easternmost range of Catholicism, Bosnia is a meeting point of civilizations, a bridge between East and West. Its unique multi-ethnic culture has been woven through a thousand years of tolerance and respect among its citizens, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation. That is why its preservation and success, as a specific microcosm, is crucial for the whole world.

However, owing to our recent past, a great struggle is now under way in my country between the idea of coexistence and the idea of division. I believe that the outcome of that struggle will have a significant bearing on resolving one of the greatest challenges of our time, that of conflict versus cooperation. If the idea of coexistence and cooperation does not prevail in Bosnia, it can hardly prevail anywhere else in the world. If the unique social fabric of my country, which was torn by crimes and force, is not restored, that will be a defeat for the very idea of coexistence, which will produce a widening gap at one of the most delicate fault lines of the world.

The growing power of humankind brings progress and prosperity. Yet the selfish side of that power cuts into the very substance on which our future depends, namely, our physical habitat and our spiritual essence.

The world we live in is changing at a speed and in a direction that is rightfully worrisome. Inequality, injustice and intolerance are on the rise. There is more conflict and less cooperation. There is ever more violence and ever less compassion, solidarity, mutual care, healthy interpersonal relations and family life. People around the world are taking to the streets, which is a dramatic warning that there is less and less fairness in the societies in which they live.

Those unsettling trends can be reversed only by decisive and coordinated global action. The future we desire will not be just a utopia if we join our forces to find the right solutions. Cooperative approaches are difficult to accomplish but are needed more than ever.

Mr. Kamau (Kenya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are not perfect, and we can be better. We can be wiser, more responsible, more willing to learn from our past mistakes. Too often we have been prisoners of our own mentalities. We perceive willingness to compromise as a weakness, but just the opposite is true — compromise requires courage. To build a future we must make compromises. To succeed we must stop indulging in manipulative kinds of populism. We must break out of the worn and frayed patterns of the past. We must turn to the future. Instead of having endless debates about what has been, we must devote ourselves to reaching agreements about what can be. We must more correctly interpret the interests of those we represent. We must listen to the views of others, no matter how different those views might be. We must understand each other better and respect each other more.

Our most important mission in the time to come will be to build bridges between cultures, religions and civilizations — bridges of trust, understanding and respect, bridges to reach out to problems the true nature of which we have only begun to understand. That is hard work that requires daring leadership. The Organization has undergone difficult trials, but it has always been the best framework for building those bridges. Let us keep it that way as we go forward.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Mongolia.

Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tsakhia: Last year, Mongolia observed the fiftieth anniversary of its joining this important body. Thanks to the choice of our free people, this son of a herder is here today, happy to report on Mongolia's progress in building a strong and free society.

More than 20 years ago, Mongolia stood at a crossroads. The flag of democracy was firmly planted in our rich and historic soil when, in the cold winter of 1989 and in the spring of the White Horse Year of 1990, decades of rule without the consent of the governed were swept aside. Individual rights and liberties prevailed. Our revolution did not break a single window, and not one drop of blood was shed.

More than two decades later, Mongolia is a stable beacon of self-governance, a moving force behind the Asian Partnership Initiative for Democracy and the current President of the Community of Democracies. We are proud to chair that world movement for freedom.

Mongolia has demonstrated a firm commitment to transparency, accountability and the rule of law. We have recognized that that is the only way that our democracy can succeed. Therefore, we cannot tolerate public corruption at any level, from the highest officials to the ordinary citizen. Corruption is like an infectious disease, growing in the dark, eating away at the public trust, scaring away investors, robbing average citizens of opportunities and attacking the vital immune system of a nation. We must shine a light on corruption and attack it head-on.

Additionally, our track record of free and fair elections and the peaceful transfer of power from one party to another can serve as an example to our sister democracies around the world. Mongolia is moving towards more direct and participatory democracy. We are empowering our people, not the Government. Mongolia is proud to be the democratic anchor in the East.

No democracy is ever perfect. We have experienced challenges similar to those experienced by other young democracies. Democracy does not end with the casting of a ballot. That is just the beginning.

Mongolia is uniquely situated on many levels, democratically, economically and geographically. Our drive for democracy, transparency and hope for peace makes our nation a vital regional player.

Economically, we are blessed by extraordinary growth — nearly 17 per cent last year. Keeping up with our high rate of growth is a very real challenge and one that we are prepared to meet directly. We are very focused on balancing two goals — first, sharing the opportunities created by our economic success with all Mongolians, and secondly, demonstrating clearly and firmly that Mongolia is open for business and a fully engaged member of the international community.

Our nation's needs are significant — improved infrastructure, better health care and world-class education. We have much to do to meet the immediate and long-term needs of our people. Our people are the key to our success. We need to invest in their future. We need to invest in both social and economic infrastructure. We are committed to making the investments needed to give our children the bright futures they deserve.

As an emerging leader of the global community, Mongolia also has important international priorities. None is more important than protecting our environment. All nations must work to preserve our planet as our economies expand and mature. I was honoured and humbled to be recognized by the United Nations Environmental Programme this year for the work we are doing in Mongolia to preserve our precious environment. We are committed to doing even more.

Another priority for Mongolia is expanding human rights. Mongolia has established an effective moratorium on capital punishment. We are seeking to permanently abolish the death penalty in Mongolia by legislative action very soon. A Government is created by its people; therefore no Government has the right to take the life of those who have created it. Let me be clear: capital punishment is ineffective and barbaric.

Mongolia cares deeply about safeguarding global peace. We must preserve our planet by eliminating nuclear weapons across the world. We are also firmly opposed to storing nuclear waste on Mongolian soil. We are celebrating 20 years of enjoying nuclear-weapon-free status. I am grateful that on 17 September, the five permanent members of the Security Council — the People's Republic of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States — signed a joint declaration reaffirming that status for Mongolia.

The dialogue on Mongolia and its nuclear-weapon-free zone, which was initiated and has been led by Mongolia, has continued to make progress. We will host an event in 2015 to make even further progress. While nuclear power may remain a viable energy option for some, any nuclear energy programme in development must submit to the permanent supervision of the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Any nation seeking to build nuclear power must not endanger the peace and security of its independent neighbours. The solution to those challenges is engagement, not isolation. The solution is more diplomacy, more dialogue and more action.

Now more than ever, it is clear that words alone are not enough. We must be united in taking action to preserve peace. That goal is even more imperative in light of the conflicts that have grown ever more tense in areas such as the Middle East. I was saddened by the death of the United States Ambassador and others in Libya. The mission of diplomacy is peaceful. Attacks on diplomatic compounds violate both the letter and spirit of international law.

Today, I join with Mongolia's allies in condemning the needless violence and bloodshed in Syria. Last year I urged action. The protest had started peacefully, but was met with violence from the Syrian Government. Each day, each hour and, indeed, each minute, the situation grows worse. In dealing with crises such as that in Syria, we must remember that those dying are not just citizens of that nation. They are also citizens of our planet. They are therefore also our brothers and sisters. The world should be unified and direct in bringing the bloodshed to an end before another life is needlessly lost.

Young girls and boys should be in school, studying for their future, building their dreams. Young girls and boys, as well as their mothers and fathers, should not be dying in the streets and living through nightmares. That crisis is not just a subject for television programmes. We Members of the United Nations are not spectators. The Organization was not created merely to watch a show unfold on our televisions. We have to act. We have to move.

Too many mothers suffer when their children struggle, whether it is for a lack of human rights or economic opportunity. Mothers want their children to be free. They want their children to have a job. They want a better life for their children. My 92-year-old-mother reminds me daily to serve all people with respect, especially women, children and the elderly. Women are the backbone of the family and the bedrock of a nation. They bring life into the world. They sense the cries of an infant. Their instincts are to care for the old, the sick and those in need. Our mothers, sisters and daughters share a core value of caring for others.

We need more women leaders. Women tend to see the whole picture. For society to advance, we need more women in public service at all levels, local to global. They bring a unique perspective that is often missing in global challenges. Has anyone ever heard of a female bloody dictator or tyrant? I think not. If there were more women in power, I think we would have more harmony, more engagement, less suffering and less conflict. I am proud to report that in our last elections, we tripled the number of women in Parliament.

The way to empower women is to ensure that girls share the same educational opportunities as boys. Education is the most basic human right. It is the fundamental building block for human development and free society. We owe our children — all of them — the opportunities that a strong education can offer. Instead of weapons, we should invest more in education, which unlocks the potential of every child. The return on such investment will be higher, both for the young men and women of tomorrow and for the world. Educated nations are more secure economically, respect human rights and have greater political freedom.

In conclusion, I am happy to report Mongolia's incredible forward movement and to renew our commitment as a part of the community of nations. We accept both the rights and responsibilities that come with that honour.

Eight hundred and fifty years ago, our great king, Chinggis Khan, was born. He built the largest land empire in the history of the world. Yet that great king did not erect a single statute to himself. Chinggis Khan famously noted, "It was easier to conquer the world on horseback than to dismount and try to govern." Let us be frank. It is not easy to be a diplomat in a troubled world. It is not easy to fight for equal opportunity for all. It is not easy to shine a light on corruption. It is not easy to govern by the rule of law. It is not easy to build real democracy.

It is easier to build statues. It is easier to destroy. It is hard to govern well. But we all must dismount and govern, and govern well. That is vital in order to build a world where our children feel safer, a world where our families are stronger, a world where all nations can prosper.

That is the legacy that real leaders need to build — not statues, but opportunities for all humankind. Let us, together, build opportunities for all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Mongolia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Tunisia.

Mr. Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Marzouki (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to start by conveying to the friendly Republic of Serbia and to President Jeremić personally my most heartfelt congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I should like also to congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the Assembly at its previous session, as well as Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the efforts that they have undertaken in favour of all peoples' aspirations that are aimed at achieving stability, peace, security and development throughout the world. I should like to convey to them the congratulations of my people, who, through the revolution of 17 December 2010, entered the fraternity of free people and democratic States.

I should now like to express our views regarding the major issues facing our world today.

Today we are witnessing the great evil perpetrated by a few groups that are using the media to disseminate their destructive and chaotic views. That makes clear the great chasm that exists with respect to the psychological, social and economic crises of our societies, which, unfortunately, exacerbate the phenomena of violence and extremism. Those warning signals need to be addressed very seriously. The First and Second World

Wars did not happen in a vacuum; they were the result of extremist statements and policies that led to human carnage and claimed tens of millions of lives.

We in Tunisia believe that we must work under the auspices of the United Nations to bring about peace for all humankind and to avert confrontations between civilizations. Tunisia's access to this forum of free and democratic peoples came at a very high cost. Tens of thousands of political prisoners, as well as exiles, were tortured before the revolution; they were the ones who paid the price. During the revolution, more than 300 citizens were killed and 2,000 others injured.

A year and a half after the revolution, Tunisia continues to move forward. We are, however, faced by a great many difficult economic and social problems, the legacy of a regime that lasted for more than two decades and whose practices included corruption, fraud and repression. But that price is negligible when compared with that paid by our brothers in Egypt, Yemen and Libya, and, of course, by our brothers in Syria, more than 25,000 of whom have been killed and tens of thousands injured, along with the destruction of the country's infrastructure. All of that will forever mark the Syrian people and affect their future for decades to come.

That high price is something we all should remember in facing the difficulties that hamper us in the building of an international system that will work to avert, lay siege to and curtail those accursed political systems that threaten the freedom of peoples and peace among peoples. The Republic of Tunisia, which has just emerged from dictatorship and which is well aware of the high toll taken by such a regime, proposes that we create a new mechanism to fight dictatorships, which are a disease threatening peace, stability and security as well as the prosperity of peoples. They not only have an impact on the freedom of people in a given country, but they also give rise to hatred and wars.

Europe was able to enjoy peace, stability and prosperity only after the fall of the fascist, Nazi and Communist dictatorships. In the medical field, methods were developed by the World Health Organization that made possible the elimination of polio in the twentieth century; that would have seemed pure fiction to doctors in the nineteenth century. We have acquired political maturity and awareness in the face of dictatorship, which, more than diseases, poses a serious threat to the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

Because the United Nations, through its Charter and institutions, has at its disposal a legal arsenal that can serve to bring about basic freedoms and peace among peoples, we invite the Organization to declare that dictatorship is a social and political scourge that must be eliminated through the combined efforts of all peoples throughout the world. It behoves us to implement a bold and ambitious programme to eliminate dictatorship in the same manner in which we got rid of polio and smallpox.

The creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) demonstrates that we are on a historic journey of building international institutions that has not yet been completed. The ICC is but a further step in the direction of the complete elimination of dictatorship. However, the Court tackles crimes only after their commission; what we require are mechanisms to prevent dictatorship from taking root in the first place.

Contemporary dictatorships are based on the use of excessive force and give themselves false legality through the holding of fraudulent elections. They use the appearance of democracy to undermine democracy itself. Those kinds of elections took place in Tunisia in 1999, 2004 and 2009. Our deposed dictator was prepared to remain in power forever. He intended, for the 2014 elections, to rewrite the Constitution so he could run for a third term. Each time he re-imposed the status quo because he knew that no internal domestic or international mechanisms existed that could rein in his political activities.

During that entire period, the Tunisian democratic opposition could not but note the paralysis of domestic and international laws and legal mechanisms. It was simply impossible for the opposition to turn to a Tunisian or international constitutional court. Although it was normal that such a constitutional court did not exist in the country, it certainly was not normal that a mechanism to that effect should fail to exist within the United Nations, because the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as many other international conventions and instruments, backed by General Assembly resolutions, all are texts that could be viewed as being the charter of humankind. The only thing missing is an implementation mechanism.

The Republic of Tunisia therefore proposes the creation of an international constitutional court similar to the ICC, which could be seized of challenging illegal constitutions or charters, or fraudulent elections. Such a court would have to be competent to consider a number of disputes and issues, to rule on the legality or illegality of elections that are not in line with the Charter of the United Nations. All systems, especially democratic ones, would face the clear duty of being recognized by the international constitutional court. The court would also make recommendations and provide the necessary advice to all those who so request. The body could serve as a deterrent against any despot, any tyrannical regime, in the case of any such regime forging election results. The court would contribute to the very disappearance of those regimes, because it would strengthen the role of peaceful civic resistance. Otherwise, the only choice would be to live under oppression or to turn to violence. We all know just how expensive that can be.

Tunisia strongly advocates the protection of the environment to ensure that we leave succeding generations a sustainable world.

We also want to leave a world living in peace and to douse the flames of war in Afghanistan, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and the Middle East. Tunisia requests rapid humanitarian intervention to help save the heroic Syrian people and to ensure the departure of President Bashar Al-Assad and his criminal regime. We call for the deployment of an Arab peace force to guarantee the transition and to create a democratic State, which would be pluralistic and that could live in peace.

Tunisia wishes to reiterate its support for the Palestinian people and their right to a just peace and the release of thousands of prisoners. We support the creation of a Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital and with membership in this Organization.

We condemn violence against women and children. We denounce the fanaticism, the anti-Semitism and the Islamophobia that one often sees. We call for tolerance to allow all religious minorities, including Muslims in Burma and Christians living in all Muslim countries, to exercise their faith freely. The chasm between the rich and the poor must be reduced.

During the upcoming Nuclear Materials Conference, Tunisia will insist on the need to free the Middle East from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

We champion pluralistic, tolerant civilian societies and institutions. Tunisia is the country of peaceful democratic revolution.

Tunisia asks the General Assembly to draw upon Article 22 of the Charter of the United Nations, by which it may establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary, and create an international constitutional court and to include this item in the agenda of its sixty-eighth session. I hope this proposal will enjoy the broadest possible support by democratic States and the mobilization of the international community, which played such an important role in the creation of the International Criminal Court. We hope that the same will be done to ensure that the proposed international constitutional court becomes a part of a comprehensive system that would enable our people and succeeding generations to avoid a scourge of blood and tears like that which has cost us so dearly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to thank the President of the Republic of Tunisia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ramotar: It is a distinct honour for me to speak today for the first time as President of the Republic of Guyana in this general debate of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

To the President of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, I extend my delegation's sincere congratulations on his election. I also pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, who presided over the sixty-sixth session with distinction during a trying period for this body. The Secretary-General deserves commendation for his unstinting service to the Organization and our continued support as the

United Nations negotiates the many issues that confront our world.

The present international system is characterized by change and crises. A tide of change is evident at all levels, from the local to the global, and it is either being precipitated or accompanied by multiple crises within the global community.

In the economic realm, continuing adverse conditions stymie global efforts to achieve internationally agreed-upon development objectives. Recovery from the global financial crisis is at best incipient and sluggish. Several of the major contributors to global output are grappling with unsustainable fiscal balances that hinder their ability to stimulate lasting recovery. The problems in those economies continue to place a drag on global growth. Compounding those difficulties is the slowdown in output in major emerging economies. Naturally, those events have had serious negative impacts on developing countries.

Although more resilient than in earlier times, developing countries have paid a heavy price as a result of the present difficulties in the world economy. That has been reflected in growth that is generally lower than pre-crisis levels. Already grappling with adverse trading arrangements and the consequences of an inconclusive and disappointing Doha Development Round, the plight of developing countries has been made worse by the prolonged global slump. Many of the gains made before 2008 have been erased by the continuing difficulties in the world economy. The small, vulnerable economies of the Caribbean face special challenges, compounded by generally high levels of indebtedness and falling export revenues.

It is within the unfavourable international climate that we have to judge our own performance. Guyana has had to face many serious challenges. However, we have worked steadfastly to build a more resilient economy and country. We have managed to forestall the worst effects of the international economic crises. Over the past six years, we have achieved an economic growth rate of approximately 5 per cent per annum. The growth rate is, I believe, the result of the investments that we have been making in our people. More than 30 per cent of our budget is dedicated to education, health, housing, water and social programmes to help the most vulnerable.

Today Guyana has achieved universal primary education, and we have come a long way towards attaining universal secondary education. However, significant challenges remain in reaching people in the remote areas of our country. If we are to encourage our youth to become responsible citizens and prepare them to be the leaders of tomorrow, we must ensure that our education systems allow for the development of their full potential.

I am therefore honoured to join the Secretary-General in promoting the Education First initiative. We are nonetheless conscious that the sustainability of our growth and that of other developing countries will be hindered if the weakness in the international economy is prolonged.

Guyana therefore continues to advocate for reform of the graduation policies and aid allocation criteria of the international financial institutions to take account of the structural vulnerability and level of economic resilience of small States, for measures to ease the debt burden, for renewed access to concessionary financing for highly indebted middle-income countries and for the strengthening of financial regulations.

The international economic crisis has also led to growing negative social problems. Despite great efforts by many countries, the war against narco–trafficking is far from over. That scourge has an impact on all our countries. It has also directly and indirectly engendered the growth in criminal activity in our region. The availability of guns in many societies — I would note that we do not produce them — most of which has come as a by-product of the narco-trade, has contributed to the growth of gun crimes and murders in the region and beyond. To deal with the problem, Guyana is ready to cooperate fully with the international community to bring the criminals to justice and free our people from the multiple dangers that drug trafficking creates.

Even as our society advances, the issues we have to deal with often seem to multiply. The issue of trafficking in persons has also arisen over the past decade as a major concern. We join with all democratic and decent people throughout the world in condemning that crime. Again, it is a campaign that requires a high level of cooperation. We are ready to play our part.

If solving those collective problems requires greater will, then other transnational problems such as the climate crisis require urgent, immediate and decisive action. Our failure to do so risks causing irretrievable harm to humankind.

Despite the strong scientific and economic case for action, the global response to the climate crisis falls short of what is required in terms of both scale and urgency. The projected level of reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions is much too low. Scientists are warning us of the catastrophic consequences if the rise in greenhouse emissions is not halted. Already some States are facing imminent extinction.

To add insult to injury, the promise of fast-start financing made at Copenhagen a few years ago has not materialized. The result is that those most at risk are effectively deprived of the means to adapt to that existential threat. We cannot continue to deal with threats to the survival of the planet with such casualness.

As a low-lying coastal State, Guyana is mindful of the dangers posed by climate change. We have been at the forefront of the appeals to the international community to match its concern with tangible action. It is clear that some countries are taking the issue seriously. Norway has led the way by giving tangible support in fighting climate change. Guyana, for its part, has chosen to pursue a low-carbon development strategy in order to ensure economic growth, social progress and environmental sustainability for present and future generations of our citizens.

But, as our experience patently demonstrates, that path is not without its hurdles. Just three short months ago, in Rio de Janeiro, we renewed our collective commitment to sustainable development and to ensuring the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet. We also agreed that the eradication of poverty was the greatest challenge facing the world today, and we recommitted ourselves to freeing humankind from poverty and hunger as a matter of urgency.

We need, therefore, as a matter of exigency, to respond to the plight of more than 1 billion of our fellow citizens who bear the ache of hunger on a daily basis. They are found on every continent, in every city and in rural communities across the world.

Their plight is worsening. Food prices are surging once again, and risk rising even further as severe droughts decimate crop yields. Those who suffer from chronic hunger today cannot wait until the international community agrees on a post-2015 development framework. They cannot wait until we craft new sustainable development goals. They need action now.

The decades-long under-investment in agriculture and rural development needs to be urgently reversed if food security is to be guaranteed on a sustainable basis.

In line with the Five Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security, Guyana calls for an acceleration of the twin-track approach to enhancing direct action against hunger for the most vulnerable and for promoting medium- to long-term sustainability in agriculture and rural development. In that context, increased international support for the expansion of rural infrastructure is critical.

Ms. Flores (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

If we are to maintain our credibility, we must avoid indecisiveness on the issues that afflict humankind. We are only three short years away from 2015, the year we set for ourselves to reach important goals for improving the security of our planet and enhancing the quality of life for all. We must do what we promised to do and we must do so without delay.

Greater alacrity is also needed in the area of politics, where tensions and unrest in many corners of our globe threaten to undermine international peace and security.

The tide of democratic change that has swept the planet and raised the expectations of peoples for social progress and better standards of life in an environment of enlarged freedoms is receding. Those legitimate aspirations deserve the respect and encouragement of the Governments concerned and the support of the international community. No people should be denied the right to live in dignity or to live a life free from fear and want. At the same time, we must be careful to guard against the superimposition of agendas based on ulterior designs that are alien to those noble aspirations. While we give solidarity and support where needed, let us not forget that this body crafted an important principle of self-determination.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are best preserved in an environment of peace and security. Respect for the rule of law and tolerance for the faiths and beliefs of all humankind must continue to be the guiding principles through which we build harmonious societies. While we condemn the attacks and insults that the recent film heaped on Islam, we believe that nothing of that nature can justify the murder of diplomats and the violence we have seen. We therefore extend our sympathy to the people and Government of the United States of America on the murder of Ambassador Christopher Stevens and others in Libya. We believe that the best homage we can pay to their memory is to work even harder for a just, peaceful and tolerant world.

In concert with the proposed theme of this debate, the United Nations must continue to pursue peaceful solutions to political conflicts, no matter how slow and painstaking the process may be.

It is my country's sincere hope that peace will soon come to the Syrian people. Guyana urges the renewal of efforts to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table. The international community must contribute to peace and not to the exacerbation of strife and conflict. Any abandonment of its role in bringing peace to Syria will result in greater suffering in that country and undermine security in that part of the world. The United Nations must therefore persevere in finding a peaceful end to the conflict. We therefore support the efforts of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States in trying to bring the conflict in Syria to a peaceful end.

I also wish to underline Guyana's strong support for the peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We are of the view that the resolution of that conflict, which has lasted for too long, is key to a lasting peace in the Middle East. Guyana recognizes the State of Palestine based on its 1967 borders and supports its aspirations to full membership in the United Nations. The Palestinian people deserve the same rights as people everywhere: to live in dignity, security, freedom and independence, at peace with all their neighbours and with the right to move freely in their own land.

Guyana is encouraged by the continuing efforts of the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan to resolve their differences through negotiations. We are hopeful also that the people of Mali will be able to overcome their current crisis and restore the celebrated legacy of Timbuktu.

Having regard for the principle of the sovereignty of States set down in the United Nations Charter, Guyana wishes to place on record once again its firm opposition to the economic, financial and commercial embargo imposed against its sister Caribbean State of Cuba. We call for an immediate end to the policy. Cuba has made great contributions to the social development of many developing countries. The lifting of the blockade can allow it to do much more.

The myriad challenges affecting our world today pose a formidable test to the multilateral system that embodies our collective aspirations for peace and development. Such challenges tax our collective resolve to act in the best interest of humankind.

The United Nations was established at a time when the vast majority of the human family was not represented in its councils and most nations could not speak on their own behalf. That is not the case today. The near universal representativeness of its membership gives the United Nations unparalleled legitimacy among world institutions. The governance of the Organization needs major reform if it is to reflect the realities of the present time and give full expression to the aspirations of the world's peoples. For the Security Council, the imperative for reform is particularly urgent. I reaffirm Guyana's steadfast support for timely reform of the Council through an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, with particular regard to the representation of developing countries.

The United Nations must also be reformed in a manner that will enhance its contribution to global economic governance, in keeping with the purposes of its Charter. The United Nations has an important role to play in addressing the democracy deficit in decision-making on such matters, which often have far-reaching implications, particularly for small States. Reforming the United Nations along those lines will provide it with greater legitimacy, which is key to its effectiveness in the eyes of the world. That legitimacy will be enhanced by the delivery of results that meet the expectations of the global citizenry in areas where action is most needed.

In conclusion, allow me to recognize the great role played by this body over the years in promoting world peace. It has done a lot to contain and resolve regional and local conflicts. In our time, the United Nations has become indispensable in tackling pressing global issues. We must therefore all work together to strengthen the Organization so as to make it more effective in the face of the many challenges that are ahead.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sein (*spoke in Burmese; English text provided by the delegation*): First and foremost, I would like to congratulate Mr. Jeremić on his well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. His country, Serbia, and Myanmar have traditionally enjoyed a close friendship and cooperation. Under his able leadership, the General Assembly will hold deliberations on measures to address the challenges faced by the world today. I am confident that his great wisdom, rich experience and great diplomatic skills will guide our discussions to produce the desired outcomes.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his outstanding leadership at the sixty-sixth session.

Myanmar consistently pursues an independent and active foreign policy, a basic tenet of which is to actively contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. In so doing, we encourage efforts to settle differences among nations by peaceful and amicable means. Our position is consistent with the essence of the theme of the current session, namely, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means".

There are different views and assessments regarding the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Brazil in June. A number of important decisions were taken on various issues, such as the renewal of commitments, the linkage of sustainable development to the Millennium Development Goals, renewable energy and the establishment of arrangements for better coordination on sustainable development. Member States must turn those decisions into actions in order to leave the legacy of a safe and sustainable environment to our future generations.

Since becoming a Member State, Myanmar has always adhered to the founding principles of the United Nations. Our participation in the General Assembly here in New York amply demonstrates our commitment to active participation in, and support of, the work of the Organization.

Today's world is full of new challenges and opportunities. Urbanization and industrialization are taking place in developing countries on an unprecedented scale. Rapid progress in information technology gives the impression that our world is getting smaller. Meanwhile, the natural environment and the climate are facing new threats and challenges. In short, the world is changing as never before. It is also timely and appropriate to devote attention during the current session to issues such as the post-2015 development agenda and the rule of law.

Myanmar is moving forward on the democratic path, but that has not been an easy task. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to share our experiences in that regard. In the ongoing reform process, we face challenges as well as opportunities. Within a short time, the people of Myanmar have brought about remarkable changes. I feel greatly privileged and honoured to dutifully serve the people as their President at this crucial time in the history of our nation. I truly consider my people as my own parents and elders.

Since I took office some 18 months ago, the parliament, the judiciary, the armed forces, the ethnic groups, the political parties, civil society and the people at large have been taking tangible and irreversible steps in the democratic transition and reform process. Leaving behind a system of authoritarian Government, in which the administrative, legislative and judicial powers were centralized, we have now established a democratic Government and a strong and viable parliament that follows a practice of checks and balances.

Despite the challenges, we can now see encouraging progress and significant developments in the country. Those include the granting of amnesties to prisoners; the dignified return of exiled political forces; the successful convening of the 2012 by-elections in a free, fair and transparent manner; the abolition of media censorship; freedom of access to the Internet; the establishment of worker and employer organizations; and increased participation by the people in the political process.

At the current stage of the political process, we can see the emergence of democratic traits, such as the increasing participation of various political forces and their mutual tolerance, magnanimity, the expanded scope of political participation, representation and accountability. Our Government and other stakeholders have fostered a new political culture of tolerance and dialogue.

The former main opposition leader, Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, now participates in parliament, not only in her capacity as a member but also as Chairperson of the parliamentary Rule of Law and Stability Committee. She is also in New York this week. As a Myanmar citizen, I would like to congratulate her on the honour that she has received in this country in recognition of her efforts for democracy.

Our country's political progress is strengthening its political legitimacy. That, in turn, facilitates the establishment of basic political stability, thereby paving the way for the economic and social transformation necessary for better living standards for the people.

The legislative body has also developed well and functions more effectively at every sitting. Parliament has now adopted landmark laws through democratic practices. We are promulgating laws and by-laws, taking into account the fact that economic development must not widen the gap between the rich and the poor. The rights of citizens must be protected. The natural environment must be preserved. Our workers should enjoy rights in line with international standards. We give carefull consideration to investments in the extractive sectors, such as energy, to ensure transparency and impartiality.

We believe that the cessation of all armed conflicts is a prerequisite to building genuine democracy. As such, we place high priority on achieving lasting peace in the country. In accordance with our motto "From war to peace", we are striving to put an end to the long-standing problems in regions inhabited by our ethnic groups. To date, we have reached ceasefire agreements with 10 armed groups. We will continue the peace talks, while further strengthening confidence-building measures. Peace negotiations at the national level will then continue towards a final peace agreement, which would completely end the armed hostilities.

In order to redress the situation in northern Myanmar, leaders of the Union Peace-making Work Committee and the Kachin armed group are holding informal consultations and are working to further strengthen confidence-building measures. We consider any loss of life and property on either side in the armed conflict as a loss for the country.

While the Government is resolutely pursuing political, social and economic reforms, some unfortunate and unexpected issues have arisen. A case in point is the recent communal violence in Rakhine State. In that connection, I would like to mention in the first place that the people inhabiting our country, regardless of race, religion and gender, have the right to live in peace and security.

As the Assembly is aware, an independent national-level investigation commission has been established to look into the issue. To ensure impartiality, the commission is composed of representatives from all strata of society, including widely respected personalities from the Buddhist, Muslim, Christian and Hindu faiths. Upon completion of its task, the commission will submit its findings and recommendations to me.

Demonstrating our determination to resolve the issue in a transparent manner, we have facilitated field visits to Rakhine State by representatives from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, United Nations agencies, the United States and resident foreign diplomats in Myanmar. Access is being facilitated to those organizations that are willing to provide relief assistance to both communities without discrimination.

The issue at hand cannot be resolved overnight. It will be resolved by taking short-term and long-term measures through a multifaceted approach, taking into account political, economic and social aspects. I sincerely believe that as an independent and sovereign State, Myanmar has done the right thing to secure our borders and to safeguard our sovereignty. We will do our utmost to resolve the issue in line with international norms.

I am well aware of the fact that Myanmar's democratic transformation process will be a complex and delicate one that requires patience. To complete the process, we certainly need the understanding and support of the United Nations and its States Members, the international community as a whole and, last but not least, the people of Myanmar. At the same time, it is equally important that Myanmar should be viewed from a different and new perspective. It is also necessary for us to be able to work in a more favourable environment than ever before.

Myanmar is now ushering in a new era. As a member in the family of nations, Myanmar will participate more actively in the activities of the United Nations in various fields. Standing as a responsible and respectable nation on the world stage, we will take on the challenges of the twenty-first century in a bold and resolute manner.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment as General-Secretary and on his achievements thus far.

Before I conclude, allow me to briefly mention an important figure, namely, U Thant, a brilliant son of Myanmar who served as the third Secretary-General. Even in those days, U Thant had a vision of one world. He envisioned a global society guided by the spirit of one world — a world safe for diversity and a place of peaceful coexistence where global citizens could practice the virtues of tolerance, cooperation, understanding and compassion. We believe that if we make his vision a reality, we will soon achieve a world that is more peaceful and prosperous. U Thant's tireless endeavours for peace and his achievements during his tenure as the Secretary-General will never be forgotten. The people of Myanmar will always take pride in and remember him as a great son of Myanmar.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ivanov (*spoke in Macedonian; English text provided by the delegation*): It is an honour and a privilege to address this forum today and to share the views of the Republic of Macedonia regarding a number of issues of concern for all of us.

Allow me first to extend our congratulations to Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election to the prestigious position of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I believe Mr. Jeremić will respond to all the challenges and tasks that await him, and I wish to express our full readiness to cooperate. Allow me also to express my thanks and to compliment the former President of the Assembly, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his successful presidency during the sixth-sixth session.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the work and efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, which undoubtedly have contributed to strengthening the role and reputation of the world Organization. It was a real honour for me and for the citizens of Macedonian to be his host. The Republic of Macedonia highly values and supports the Secretary-General's endeavours, and he can count on our continued full support.

Now, more than ever in the history of humankind, the nations of the world are confronted with the same challenges, are victims of the same threats and share the yearning for a better future. Effective multilateralism is of essential importance for the development of collective action to respond to common challenges. The United Nations is an organization whose legitimacy to tackle global challenges through global actions is universally accepted and undeniable. The support provided by Member States is of crucial importance. I wish to assure the Assembly that the Republic of Macedonia will continue to contribute actively to the reinforcement and improvement of the efficiency of the system.

This diverse world is in need of a common denominator, a link that unites all individuals, peoples and countries regardless of differences in culture, language and religion. That link is the Charter of the United Nations, with its principles and fundamental values. The Republic of Macedonia is firmly dedicated to respect for the Charter, which serves as the basis of its foreign policy. Ever since our declaration of independence and after becoming a Member of the United Nations, the peaceful resolution of international disputes has been one of our leading principles and guidelines for our behaviour as a responsible member of the international community. Therefore, I wish to welcome the General Assembly recommendation to put the issue forward as a topic of debate this year.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. When speaking about international disputes, it is inevitable to refer to prevention activities as one of the mechanisms for their resolution.

Today preventive diplomacy has proven its relevance once again. In the early days of our independence, the Republic of Macedonia was host to the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force, a one-of-a-kind mechanism for the United Nations at the time. It was a positive experience for Macedonia, the United Nations and the Member States involved. We are witness to the fact that the evolution of international relations and the increased complexity of challenges in our globalized world confirm the need to develop mechanisms and to use good offices.

At this point, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for advocating more thorough analysis of this issue in his report on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution (A/66/811), which produced good, operative solutions for upgrading the capacity of the United Nations in this area. I believe we can and must explore new ways and possibilities for strengthening the role of the Secretary-General in the resolution of international disputes.

In a time of global economic crisis, the focus of the United Nations on preventing conflicts and further developing preventive diplomacy is understandable. The Republic of Macedonia believes it makes sense to focus on the effective and efficient use of resources — which are shrinking — which is why we have been attentively following all activities relating to the report of the Secretary-General on civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict (A/66/311) and to the implementation of the recommendations of the Senior Advisory Group found therein. It is very important that the international community make progress in preventing new conflicts and relapses into conflict in vulnerable countries.

The Republic of Macedonia stands ready to offer its experience in the area of democratic institution-building, based on the Macedonian inclusive, democratic model of integration without assimilation. In that context, I wish to refer to the recent High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels. The Republic of Macedonia attaches great importance to this issue, which is undoubtedly the basis of all democratic societies, and the report of the Secretary-General on the rule of law (A/66/749) has provided food for thought and further action. The Republic of Macedonia believes that inclusiveness is an important principle that needs to be implemented when it comes to the rule of law. The rule of law is multifaceted and should cover all stakeholders, especially civil society.

The rule of law is incomplete and is impossible to achieve without respect for human rights. As the Secretary-General said in his statement at the opening of the general debate at this session, "We shall have neither peace nor development without respect for human rights and the rule of law" (see A/67/PV.6). As a country building a model of inclusive democracy, the Republic of Macedonia attaches particular importance to the development, promotion and protection of human rights. It is the right and duty of every country to safeguard and promote the rights of its citizens. Human rights should reinforce and reaffirm national sovereignty. This, then, will be the best guarantee that, as a principle, the responsibility to protect will remain the desired first and primary pillar. The Republic of Macedonia will continue its efforts to preserve and promote human rights — to promote democracy and the rule of law, gender equality and the improvement of the role of women, and to protect vulnerable and marginalized groups.

We also strongly support Member States' active participation in the universal periodic review as a mechanism for promoting the effectiveness of the Human Rights Council. In that context, I would like to remind the Assembly that the Republic of Macedonia has presented its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2014-2016. We are convinced that our experience in this area, along with our particular achievements and ambition to promote this area of global governance, will enable us to make a full contribution to further strengthening and affirming human rights in subsequent years.

Once again this year all priorities are focused on the three most important pillars of our world Organization:

peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. All are mutually related. There can be no sustainable development without peace and security, and there can be no sustainable peace without development and poverty reduction. The Millennium Development Goals continue to be the parameters by which we evaluate our success.

The Republic of Macedonia's aspiration to become a member of the European Union has created the necessary spur for political, economic and social reforms. Promoting equitable and comprehensive development founded on human rights has provided a solid base for the national development agenda. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia therefore established a programme focused on emphasizing economic development, improving our citizens' standard of living, creating jobs, fighting corruption, increasing education opportunities and promoting democracy and inter-ethnic relations.

Balanced and sustainable development is a major investment in the future, and in the interest of the general well-being, everyone must participate. The outcome document of Rio+20 — the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex) — should be taken as an additional impetus to use alternative possibilities for achieving sustainable development. The Republic of Macedonia, in coordination with the policies of its European partners, will advocate expanding those alternatives.

Sustainable development is closely linked to disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change. Recognizing that interdependence, the Republic of Macedonia supports a holistic approach to the implementation of these goals in national, regional and global strategies, policies and plans.

We have demonstrated our dedication to the region of South-eastern Europe and to regional cooperation through our chairmanship of the South-East European Cooperation Process. The region is not immune to global challenges and threats, and such threats can be removed only by meeting the obligations and numerous commitments we have all undertaken. I am convinced that intensive regional cooperation in this area will help us build a region more resistant to natural disasters. We wish focus our chairmanship on the process of meeting the real and everyday needs of our citizens — those of peace, security and development — that are the result of global challenges that recognize neither political and ethnic barriers nor religious groups. Among the priorities of Macedonia's chairmanship will be cooperation in economic and agricultural matters, culture and tourism, science and education, cross-border concerns and the protection of the environment. Our principles are based on solving citizens' problems regardless of ethnic, religious or any other affiliation. I see no way of doing this other than through close regional cooperation.

Let us build good-neighbourly relations on the basis of solidarity. In return, we expect our neighbours to show solidarity in actions for a safer region. We can and we must be ready for future challenges so as to provide a safer future for future generations. Our young people will hold us to this. They expect our generation to behave responsibly. They live in a time of new technologies, and they already know what is going on at the global level. I believe firmly that we should focus all our energy on young people, to create youth for the future and a future for our youth, formed in a spirit of dialogue, tolerance and respect for diversity. That is why, in parallel with the South-East European Cooperation Process summit, we will also host the eleventh Forum of the Dialogue among Civilizations, in cooperation with UNESCO and the Council of Europe, with the focus on youth.

As President of the Republic of Macedonia, permit me to say that we are greatly looking forward to celebrating the tenth anniversary of the first regional gathering of the dialogue among civilizations, which we are preparing together with UNESCO. It was here, at this rostrum, that my predecessor, President Boris Trajkovski, with the strong backing of the United Nations and UNESCO, shared his dreams about that initiative, which was then realized in Ohrid in 2003, when the wounds from the bloody conflict in the former Yugoslavia were still fresh. The words of the Ohrid message speak of the undoubtedly enormous potential of the Republic of Macedonia: to be a functional multi-ethnic, multilingual and multireligious foundation of the European Balkans and of the Balkans in Europe.

Next year we will host the third World Conference on Dialogue among Religions and Civilizations. The Republic of Macedonia has always believed that dialogue is irreplaceable and put its belief into practice. We condemn all forms of violence. No one should be a victim of violence — not individuals, peoples, States or their official representatives. Just as the limits of decency must be observed in public spaces, so violence can never be a fitting response.

The rule of law and human rights are fundamental principles and they cannot be subject to compromise. I fully agree with the position of the Secretary-General, stated during his visit to Macedonia in July, that we should never make compromises when it comes to universally acknowledged principles. It is the duty of the United Nations and of each and every one of us not to subject the rule of law and human rights to compromise. Therefore, I have asked the Secretary-General to bring renewed attention to the 2008 report of the Independent Expert on minority issues, Ms. Gay McDougall, entitled "Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development" (A/HRC/7/23).

Allow me as well to recall the recommendation in that report that the Government of our southern neighbour should abstain from disputing whether there is a Macedonian minority, and instead focus on the protection of the right to self-identification, freedom of expression and freedom of association of that community. In the recommendation, our neighbour is urged to respect the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, according to which the country should be allowed to use the word Macedonian to denote its name and to freely express its ethnic identity. The report concludes that the right to protection must be respected, as elaborated in the 1992 Declaration on Minorities and in the basic international conventions on human rights.

I expressed my expectation that the Secretary-General would make use of his authority and engage in order to overcome the impasse on the talks regarding our country's name that are taking place under his auspices. Respect for the judgment of the International Court of Justice will mean respect for international law and the rule of law in practice. I believe in this process. I believe that this process can lead to a solution, but we cannot wait another 19 years for that to happen.

Today, in the twenty-first century, it seems quite absurd to be called "a former nation" or "a former colony". In the name of the dignity of my people, I hereby take this opportunity to publicly thank all 134 Members of the United Nations that have recognized the constitutional name of my country, which is the Republic of Macedonia. And here is my appeal to everyone here: address us from the point of view of the future.

I fully subscribe to what was said by the United States President, Mr. Barack Obama, just a few days ago, in this very Hall. We believe that freedom and self-determination are not unique to one culture. Those are not simply American values or Western values, they are universal values.

It has happened in the history of the United Nations that a country was given additional criteria to become a Member, but the 1948 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice stated clearly that this was not correct and was contrary to the Charter of the United Nations. Except in our case, no one has been deprived of the right of self-identification thus far. Macedonia should get what it rightfully deserves: something that all Member States represented here already have and enjoy. Without the right of self-identification, Macedonia is prevented from being equal to all other Member States.

In that regard we are discussing international law. We are talking about the rule of law. Here is the judgment of the International Court of Justice adopted 10 months ago in favour of the Republic of Macedonia. We are asking for this judgment, adopted by a body of the United Nations, to be respected. We ask for this because we have been prevented from using our constitutional name even at this very rostrum. The International Court of Justice, in paragraph 95 of the judgment, states clearly that Macedonia has the right to refer to itself as the Republic of Macedonia in its relations with the other party and within international organizations.

In a spirit of good-neighbourly relations, and because of our strong determination to overcome and settle unresolved issues, I take this opportunity to appeal to our neighbour to work together with us in that direction. From this rostrum in the heart of the United Nations, I urge them to respect the judgment of the International Court of Justice and their own internationally assumed obligations. We are neighbours, but we wish to be more than just neighbours. We wish to be partners, allies and friends, and to be able to build together the present and future of our people, our countries and our region. We wish to work together with them and build a safe and free world for our children.

The protracted nature of the reform of the Security Council and the revitalization of the General Assembly, as well as the comprehensive process of reinforcing the coherence and efficiency of the system, should not discourage us. On the contrary, they should serve as an impetus for further mobilization.

Only the United Nations can provide integrated solutions for interdependent issues such as development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian action.

In conclusion, I invite all Member States to recall the words of Jean Monnet, the father of modern Europe. He described the use of the veto in modern European history as the expression of lack of power for dialogue and the impossibility of overcoming national egoism. Let us build a prosperous world for our future generations.

We hope that our neighbour will make its way out of crisis as soon as possible. We have proposed a series of practical measures on how to upgrade our economic and good neighbourly cooperation, which should include a bilateral agreement on the avoidance of double taxation. Macedonian taxes are favourable for our neighbour's businessmen and, as always, the doors of the Republic of Macedonia are wide open to them.

The Republic of Macedonia firmly believes that the United Nations remains the centre of multilateralism and global governance. The Organization inspires universal dialogue, which in most cases results in joint solutions for handling global problems in order to reach a shared vision of the future of the international system.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish first to express my Government's congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and a former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, on his country's election to preside over the Assembly. We are very happy about that because, both in the past and currently, his country has played an active role in eliminating tensions and inequality and in strengthening the rule of law in international relations. We are firmly convinced that, during his tenure, the proceedings of the General Assembly will be conducted in a climate of consensus and solidarity among Member States.

The current session of the General Assembly is being held at a time of turmoil, when many States are experiencing internal tensions, there is an acute economic crisis, developing countries and their emerging economies are encountering difficulties, the environment and the atmosphere are deteriorating, and other major catastrophes have caused the loss of human lives and the destruction of infrastructures vital to humankind.

The major efforts made by the Secretary-General through the United Nations system have not been sufficient to have a decisive impact. Greater commitment, joint action and unified approaches on the part of all States are required to combat with determination the problems of concern to everyone today. In point of fact, the Secretariat has stressed the main outlines of the problems, which constitute the agenda for the current session — for instance, developing countries' need for economic growth, the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of the African continent, the promotion of human rights and the provision of humanitarian assistance, the promotion of justice and international law, disarmament, and the need to combat drug trafficking, terrorism, the use of mercenaries, piracy and other crimes.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea wishes to stress that of all those problems none has been more destructive than underdevelopment, which the United Nations must not look upon with indifference. The annual victims of hunger and the diseases in the developing world exceed the number of victims of hostile confrontations recorded each year worldwide. The adverse effects of illiteracy, the lack of housing, and malnutrition experienced in developing countries are greater than those caused by natural disasters. In our times, ignorance and the lack of scientific and technical know-how owing to underdevelopment are more detrimental to a human being than terrorism and drug addiction. In view of all those adverse circumstances, we propose that the Economic and Social Council adopt special programmes to assist the least developed countries, with a view to their overcoming the lack of basic infrastructure which is hampering their development — programmes that the more developed countries should commit to supporting and that could serve as a basis for mutually beneficial cooperation among affected States.

We cannot imagine the promotion of human rights in a society subject to the restrictions of underdevelopment. From basic human dignity itself to all the other rights necessary for a dignified existence, including physical and moral integrity, freedom and, finally, well-being — these are what determine whether people fully enjoy their universally recognized rights. There can be no question as to which comes first, human rights or economic development. We must recognize that human rights cannot be be enjoyed by people engulfed in underdevelopment.

With respect to combating underdevelopment, we welcome the fact that Africa has already begun promoting programmes for economic development and modern democratic systems, which are liberating their peoples from underdevelopment despite many obstacles that still obstruct progress and attempts at perpetuating new colonialist interests in Africa. Most of the internal conflicts in Africa are supported by foreign interests that try to ensure their continued presence in the continent. As the saying goes, "If the river runs backwards, it is the fishermen who win".

We ourselves in Equatorial Guinea are very happy with the progress made in our economic development programme, which seeks to achieve an emerging economy by 2020 through the use of the resources provided by the exploitation of oil and natural gas. Thanks to those resources, we are more than meeting most of our needs in infrastructure, including roads, hospitals, schools, vocational training centres, universities, ports, airports, the drinking water supply, telephone communications, air, sea and land transportation, urban development, housing and electricity. In parallel to that programme, we have adopted radical political reforms, appropriate to the rapid development that the country is experiencing, so as to ensure the strictest possible control of the Government's activity, to give greater freedoms to the people and to protect human rights to the utmost. Under those reforms, a leader may not remain in office for more than two terms. Parliament is being expanded for a more universal representation of the people. Economic and social decisions are to be taken on the basis of technical criteria and in the interests of society. The President must by law be assisted by an advisory body. The independence of the judicial and legislative powers is being strengthened. A body to monitor and audit public and private economic activity is being established. Lastly, an authority to protect and ensure human rights is being set up. A transition Government has been formed to implement those reforms within eight months.

My Government has always been very responsive to the issue of humanitarian assistance. In that regard, Equatorial Guinea proposes the establishment of a trust fund of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for food security in Africa that will be open to less developed countries. From this rostrum, we announce an initial contribution of $30 million. We call on African countries and other donors to make their contributions in support of that initiative.

My Government's humanitarian spirit has always aspired to setting up initiatives that support humankind's development. Equatorial Guinea therefore established the Equatorial Guinea UNESCO prize to encourage the scientific community to research the possibility of finding life-saving cures, in particular for those suffering from AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The Director-General of FAO agreed to the initiative to set up such a fund.

With regard to the other important items on our agenda, we understand that international peace and security essentially depend on respect for the principles of international law: respect for the independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State; the sovereign equality of nations and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States; respect for, and compliance with, international commitments; and the promotion of mutually beneficial and fair friendship and cooperation relations among States.

Those norms are the basis for promoting justice and law in international relations, and no State or group of States should step forward to police their implementation. Such an act usurps the authority of the United Nations and undermines its effectiveness. The United Nations should impose its authority at the international level, avoiding any possible manipulation through external pressure from those that violate the spirit of its principles.

Meanwhile, Equatorial Guinea endorses the wishes of the entire African continent to obtain a response to one of its legitimate demands, made on various occasions, namely, Security Council reform by increasing the number of Council members in both categories and reserving two seats as permanent members and five as non-permanent members for the African region. Democratic principles and the law are advocated at the United Nations. Africa claims its rights, including in the Security Council. Africa wishes to participate in the taking of decisions that affect its future.

With the assistance of all, we will succeed in adopting appropriate measures to reduce the tendency towards unilateralism and hegemony in international relations. We will succeed in mitigating the effects of policies that threaten the peace and sovereignty of States and that oppose the economic and social development of peoples, thereby significantly violating the principles of international law.

With regard to disarmament, which Equatorial Guinea fully supports even though it is neither a manufacturer nor a consumer of any sophisticated weapons of mass destruction, we believe that there should be no ambiguity on that issue. One cannot have the best of both worlds.

We do not believe there to be a threat from other planets of the solar system or other bodies in outer space. The possession of nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction is a disgrace to today's humankind, which is preparing its own destruction. So who should arm themselves and who should be disarmed? The end of the Cold War was supposed to also mean the end of the arms race. It is now time for humankind to build its own future instead of wasting resources on extermination plans.

Those that adopt embargoes against certain Governments should not be insensitive to their repercussions and to the suffering that they cause to the population, in particular the most vulnerable sectors. Such measures run counter to the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the United Nations. Sanctions and embargoes, whatever their real nature, should always take into account the humanitarian component with regard to the people who are suffering. Therefore, we would suggest that the rights of the individual be given priority whenever any kind of sanctions are adopted. Accordingly, we appeal for the suspension of the embargo against Cuba.

We will return to Equatorial Guinea with the sincere hope that the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly will be a milestone in the process of humanizing international relations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Dhoinine (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, to extend my warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I should like to express to him the pleasure of the Union of the Comoros at seeing him preside over our work and to assure him of the full support of the Comorian delegation in discharging his noble task.

I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, former Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar, who presided over the General Assembly with such wisdom, skill and determination and who was successful in working to strengthen its role.

Finally, I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the vision with which he has led the Organization and for the worthy initiatives he has ceaselessly undertaken to promote respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially peacebuilding and stability for greater development.

As was the case last year, the General Assembly is meeting in a context of global uncertainty. It is a climate marked by multifaceted crises, all of them major challenges for our institution. It is meeting at a moment when one of the Members of our United Nations family, Syria, is being rent asunder by a steadily deterioraiting fratricidal war, which poses a serious threat to peace both for the region and for the world, due to that country's strategic geopolitical position. The resignation of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, demonstrated, were there any need for such, the complexity of managing the Syrian conflict. It therefore behoves us to act without delay to put an end to the terrible suffering of the brotherly Syrian people and to save what can be saved of its various infrastructures.

Just as important is the Palestinian cause. For decades now, it has awaited a fair and lasting solution, one found through our shared desire to establish together the solid foundations for a world of peace and prosperity. The Union of the Comoros reiterates its full support for the Palestinian people and associates itself with the formula of a Palestinian State as a full-fledged member of the community of nations, living side by side and in perfect security with the State of Israel.

The situation in northern Mali is also alarming. The attacks carried out against the civilian population of the region, the serious violations of human rights, the obstacles erected to humanitarian access, and the destruction and looting of holy places and other religious, historical and cultural sites are barbarous acts that are contrary to the principles of Islam. That is why my country supports the commitment of the Economic Community of West African States, alongside the African Union and the United Nations, to put an end to those violations, which have gone on for much too long.

One should not, however, lose sight of the fact that while some advocate fanaticism and extremism, Islamophobia is also taking on alarming proportions. Indeed, the dissemination of the video *Innocence of Muslims* has led to waves of indignation and many demonstrations throughout the world. Several million believers have felt their faith insulted and harmed.

However, the protests against the unspeakable insults to Islam, Muslims and the Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him — cannot justify the violence against Western missions in many countries. My country therefore condemns the terrorist attacks that in Benghazi, Libya, caused the death of the American Ambassador, Chris Stevens, and a number of his colleagues. I take this opportunity to reiterate to the American people and to the grieving families of the victims the most heartfelt condolences of the people and the Government of the Comoros.

The ongoing existence of many hotbeds of tension throughout the world, the violation of fundamental human rights, and the growth of piracy and terrorism all speak to the need for urgent and in-depth reform of the Security Council. My country therefore reiterates its support for the African Union's position regarding the need to reform the Council for better representation of the international community and for greater effectiveness in the settlement and management of conflicts.

A few decades ago, my country resolutely committed itself to the path of democracy. It wishes to make its contribution to the promotion of a world of peace, security, justice and fairness. That is why I have committed myself, since my accession to the presidency, to spare no effort in promoting the rule of law and good governance in the Union of the Comoros. Above and beyond the setting up of all institutions provided for under our Constitution, including the Supreme Court, I have given major priority to the fight against corruption. An anti-corruption law has already been promulgated, and a national commission to combat and prevent corruption has now been set up and made operational. I thank the European Union for its assistance and expertise in this area, which enabled us to develop the document for our national strategy to combat corruption.

This year once again, the global economic and financial crisis is at the heart of the Assembly's general debate. That crisis has made evident the urgent need for a global form of economic governance based on the values of responsibility, fairness and solidarity. It has also placed before the eyes of the world the urgency of an in-depth reform of the international financial institutions.

The repercussions of the crisis are becoming increasingly palpable, particularly in developing countries, where the rising price of staples threatens peace and stability. The crisis has also intensified problems linked to energy, which powers all socioeconomic development, limiting our ability to promote development through investments.

Climate change is another major challenge our countries face. We must respond effectively to that phenomenon, which affects the entire planet, especially small island developing States such as the Union of the Comoros.

I wish to stress that last April my country experienced two weeks of unusually violent torrential rains that hammered our islands, causing damage that had disastrous consequences for our population and the national economy. Ten per cent of the population was affected, a high percentage for a country as sparsely populated as the Comoros. In the name of the whole Comorian people and of my Government, I would therefore like to thank all the partners and friends who offered us urgent humanitarian aid to help us address that dramatic situation.

The unprecedented storms led my Government to draw up a rapid recovery plan, with the aid and support of the international community. It will enable us to better help those affected and to restore destroyed infrastructure throughout our territory. That plan, which contains procedures aimed at restoring the situation within a period of six to 12 months, was launched at a round table held on 5 September in Pretoria, with the fraternal support of our friendly brother country, the Republic of South Africa. I would therefore like to appeal to all here to help finance the rapid recovery plan, whose cost has been estimated at $18 million. That will allow my country to better face the current situation and to better prepare for the future.

The time has come to relaunch with greater determination a number of pending international issues, in particular those regarding measures to mitigate or adapt to climate change and to make operational the Copenhagen Climate Fund. We need to honour the commitments made to the countries of the South by implementing, inter alia, the agreements on emissions linked to deforestation and forest degradation, as well as a comprehensive agreement on climate change. We must also respect the Kyoto Protocol on the reduction of greenhouses gases within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Finally, we must do our utmost to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Faced with all those equally important challenges, I urgently call on the most developed countries to apply to the most fragile countries the same mechanisms that have been implemented to reduce the impact of the crisis in Europe, in order to prevent more unfortunate consequences, knowing that our countries depend on the financial contributions of our people abroad. In that context, my country, which is currently a beneficiary of the Extended Credit Facility of the International Monetary Fund, hopes by December to have reached the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. In other words, the new world economic order, based on the shared principles of fairness, transparency and prosperity that we have willingly embraced, requires a real and dynamic easing of the crisis that has struck the world. Africa impatiently awaits the advent of that new order to realize economic and social integration and to embark resolutely on the path of sustainable development.

In conclusion, with respect to my country's stability, before the General Assembly, I once again appeal to France that a frank and sincere dialogue finally be set up between our two closely linked nations on the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte. It has grown increasingly clear that the fact that Mayotte remains under French administration constitutes a threat to the peace and stability of the three other Comorian islands — the peace that remains the foundation of freedom and prosperity.

It is true, and a secret to no one, that that island has always served as a rear guard for the detractors of the Comoros, those who would prefer not to see our country move forward despite its great potential. Moreover, the year 2012, now drawing to a close, proved particularly dramatic for my people. Men, women and children aboard flimsy boats known as kwassa kwassa perished in the narrow waters that separate the Comorian islands of Anjouan and Mayotte because of the visas that France imposed on the Comorians of the other islands. Surely that painful, unacceptable situation, which has lasted for decades, cannot fail to move this worldwide Assembly, whose chosen theme for this year is "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", including the rule of law at the national and international levels.

I therefore hope that France will honour its commitments as a country that respects international law. Finally, I hope it will respond positively to our urgent call so that together we may find a positive way for Mayotte to return to its natural home, which remains the Union of the Comoros. That is how to put an end to the humanitarian tragedy and to guarantee lasting stability for my country. It is through a definitive solution to this conflict, which has lasted far too long, that France can contribute to the ongoing efforts to enhance regional integration, and thus to safeguard the interests of this region of the Indian Ocean that we hope to build together in stability and peace.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Union of the Comoros for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam.

Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee (Brunei Darussalam): On behalf of His Majesty the Sultan and the people of Brunei Darussalam, I would like to congratulate our new President, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, on his election and to wish him much success in the coming year. We also wish to express our appreciation to the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his dedication to the work of the Organization. We especially thank him for his efforts to encourage us all to meet successfully the considerable challenges now being posed by life in the twenty-first century.

At the same time, we would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his constant willingness to apply the core values of the United Nations directly whenever he has been asked to act on our behalf. We particularly welcome the five-year Action Agenda he has set out and the common vision it offers us. At its heart, the vision is one of tolerance, respect and understanding among nations.

Sadly, over the past two weeks, we have witnessed events that present a very different vision. In considering them, Brunei Darussalam has stated its unreserved condemnation of their cause. We have equally strongly advised all our people of our Government's absolute rejection of the violence and extremism that have been their result. Here at the United Nations, we congratulate the Secretary-General on his statement about the matter. In doing so, we reaffirm our commitment to the universal values of tolerance and respect. Similarly, we uphold the institutions, structures and due processes of international affairs that this great Organization embodies.

Turning now to the theme for this year's general debate — "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" — for me the key word is "adjustment". I think it is well chosen. It suggests change that is carefully and gradually done. It does not invite confrontation. For us in Brunei Darussalam, it matches the main purpose of this annual meeting. We see it as an opportunity to express our satisfaction and our concern about how successfully the United Nations is managing the process of globalization that we have nationally embraced.

In other words, are we satisfied with things as they are; or do we see a need for some adjustment? In answering that question, we would like to start by expressing considerable satisfaction with many aspects of the Organization's work. The media constantly headline the supposed defects, failures and setbacks of the United Nations. But beneath all of that we observe the enormous contribution of the United Nations to the welfare of future generations. I would therefore like to express our deep satisfaction with the work of United Nations agencies and international bodies. We believe they are providing us with the opportunity to move out of nineteenth-century colonialism and twentieth-century national interests. In the spirit of our theme here, they are helping us to adjust to twenty-first century regionalism and eventually, we hope, to successful globalism.

I would therefore like to suggest three particular areas we find especially important. In each, we believe that the United Nations is helping to create a world in which the people it represents can look to a better future — one of hope rather than anguish, confidence instead of fear, and trust in the place of despair.

The first area is the difficult long-term work being done on sustainable development. We were impressed by the results of the Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in June and built on 20 years of effort. Sustainable development is now far more than an academic topic; it is firmly part of the United Nations long-term development agenda. Work has moved from theory into many practical ideas, projects and activities.

The second area is covered in the United Nations Development Programme's *Millennium Development Goals Report 2012*. We especially noted the following statements by the Secretary-General in his foreword. The target of reducing extreme poverty by half has been reached five years ahead of the 2015 deadline. The target has been achieved on halving the proportion of people who lack dependable access to improved sources of drinking water. The conditions for more than 200 million people living in slums have been greatly improved. The primary school enrolment of girls has equalled that of boys. There is accelerating progress in reducing child and maternal mortality. We are especially encouraged by his conclusion that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 is challenging but possible.

The third area is the sum of the ongoing efforts of United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF and the Food and Agriculture Organization, which are operating in almost 150 countries. Their work is both wide-ranging and specific in its emphasis upon the basic components of everyday life for the people we represent.

Success in those three areas means that our children and grandchildren will live in a world where ordinary people and their families have a real chance to live together in hope and confidence. That is the reason for our satisfaction with the work of the United Nations as a global Organization. In other words, in terms of the fundamental work of the United Nations, we see no need to undertake what our theme here describes as adjustment.

Rather, it is in the structure of the Organization that we see a need for some things to be adjusted. The reason appears clear to many of those of us who are small both physically and politically. The current structure appears far too often to be the deep-seated cause of the headline news I referred to. We see it as a twentieth-century structure designed to meet twentieth-century realities. It is personified in the 64 years of suffering by the ordinary people of Palestine, and in all other desperate situations in which the root causes of conflict and confrontation are still buried in the past century.

Simply put, that must change. In our globalized world, we are all equally interdependent and equally responsible. But, like many other members in the Assembly, we believe that the current structure does not truly reflect those realities. As such, it needs adjusting so that ancient political fault lines are repaired.

The form we hope it will increasingly take should resemble that of some regions today that operate on the basis of consensus, rather than compromise and confrontation. That is what we have accepted in our own region of South-East Asia. It is the spirit behind the present focus of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) on building a peaceful and mutually respectful community of nations, regardless of background, economic resources or national preoccupations.

That is why we greatly appreciate the strong support and goodwill that is constantly shown us by our many partners from outside the region. It is also why we in Brunei Darussalam, the smallest of all Member nations, feel honoured and privileged to assume the chairmanship of ASEAN next year. That organization is an association of neighbours that have deliberately chosen to adjust their region's previous identity. Until 45 years ago, ours was one of the most unstable regions on Earth, a confrontation point for the national interests of great Powers and a focal point of the Cold War.

Now, our region has adjusted, and is determined to operate in the interests of its community of 600 million citizens. It will continue to do so not by conflict or confrontation and not by compromising national values, but by peaceful consensus. In the same way, we hope that the structure of the United Nations can be gradually and carefully adjusted.

Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports of Jamaica

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports of Jamaica.

Ms. Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports of Jamaica, was escorted to the rostrum.

Ms. Simpson Miller (Jamaica): Allow me to congratulate the President on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I assure him of the full support and cooperation of the Jamaican delegation. I would also like to place on record my delegation's appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his invaluable guidance of the work of the Assembly during its sixty-sixth session. I also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and the staff of the Secretariat for their dedication and hard work in serving Member States.

There is a tale of a young woman from a rural village in Jamaica who was approached by a political candidate seeking to represent her community. "What is it you want most from your representatives?" the candidate asked. The young woman considered the question for a moment. Slowly and thoughtfully she replied, "All I want is an opportunity. I want you to provide me and my family with a living environment in which I can work, contribute and prosper. Most of all, I want you to provide for my family an environment that is safe and secure".

For hundreds of years, our respective peoples have looked to their leaders with great expectations. They elected Governments that they felt could provide them with the greatest sense of well-being and security. Historically and to the present day, they looked to heads of State and Government to provide them, their families, their communities and ultimately their respective nations with leadership and direction that foster that all-important sense of well-being and of feeling secure. Over time, across the world, there has been an increasing sense of impatience and agitation born of a sense of growing global insecurity.

Accordingly, the United Nations agenda has expanded its focus to address the multifaceted challenges of food security, climate change, global pandemics and the global economic and financial crisis. We have already witnessed citizens from several nations spring into action with demands for change. Others chose to occupy various spaces in protest. In the light of that reality, many of those here — indeed, many of us as leaders — stand as buffers between apathy and anarchy.

The theme for this year's session of the Assembly, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", is most appropriate and timely, given current events in a number of countries and regions that pose a threat to international peace and security. It reflects the call by that young woman, who simply asked her representative to provide for her and hers an environment that is safe and secure. Yet her request is not as simple as it appears.

The insecurity, impatience and unease that have emerged worldwide are explosive accelerants. They emerge from the heartbreaking scourge of poverty that was so aptly described by the Jamaican national hero, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, who reminded us that poverty is

> "a hellish state to be in. It is no virtue. It is a crime. To be poor is to be hungry without possible hope of food; to be sick without hope of medicine; to be tired and sleepy without a place to lay one's head; to be naked without the hope of clothing; to be despised and comfortless".

We must seek to rid ourselves of the conditions that lead to poverty. We must pursue social and economic policies that will ensure social equity and justice for our people and increase their well-being and sense of security. That can be achieved only if we, as Member States, work together in good faith to secure the sustainable future we agreed to at Rio de Janeiro. Let us create the future we want, and let us put our people first.

The global economy continues to be beset by uncertainty. That is compounded by the lingering negative effects of the financial and economic crises. The global shocks have affected all our peoples. They threaten our communities, weaken our families and challenge individuals everywhere, regardless of hemisphere or region or whether they live in so-called developed or developing countries or in the north, south, east or west. Some have fewer options than others. That is a vicious circle of insecurity.

We must not forget that a significant proportion of the world's poorest citizens live in middle-income countries. That diverse group includes both large developing economies and small island developing States, such as those in the Caribbean. Many of us face common challenges. Several are highly indebted and extremely vulnerable to external shocks and natural disasters. We face significant obstacles in our efforts to spur economic recovery and growth. We are hampered by the volatility of energy and food prices, decreases in export commodity prices, and weak capital inflows. Increasing food prices create untold hardships for many of our people, particularly the most vulnerable in our societies. Small countries need greater support in order to build resilience to economic and environmental shocks.

I come to the Assembly today from such a nation. Jamaica is a nation small in size but enormous in spirit — a nation with a people whose speed defies the laws of physics, whose musical messages have inspired positive and revolutionary global change and whose minds have given the world myriad solutions in areas that include science, law and medicine. Yet many nations like Jamaica have great possibility and potential that are not reflected in, or reflective of, their current economic indicators.

Reforms in global economic governance, including of the international financial institutions, are required in order to take into account the need of small and vulnerable economies for special and differential treatment. Refocusing financial flows in the development agenda will also go a long way in helping to bolster our natural resilience and resolve. We commend the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on the work it has done over the last 48 years to advance the trade and development agenda and assist developing countries. There is still much to be done, and we look forward to working with the full range of development partners.

Women and children make up one particularly vulnerable group of our world. What we call external shocks cause real and serious dislocation in their daily lives. Too many mothers have to face tough choices to meet their basic needs. Too many children are subjected to violence and abuse. Children, especially girls, are being used as pawns for economic gain, including through human trafficking and other exploitive actions. Human trafficking is a dastardly threat to the welfare of our women, girls and boys. Our ancestors fought for our freedom. It is disgraceful that at this juncture of world history we should see the emergence of a form of modern-day slavery that allows women, girls and boys to be traded as chattel. Many vulnerable young women are deceived and lured away by attractive offers to get them and their families out of poverty. They then find themselves in a strange land, with no support, no identity and no hope of returning home; sold into modern-day slavery, their very bodies used as a currency of exchange.

Jamaica is resolute in its commitment to strengthening local and national programmes to eliminate violence against women and children. At the same time, I call on the international community to take bold action to address this scourge. Issues that affect women and children must be central to decision-making processes. We look forward to continued collaboration with UN-Women and the international community to help break this cycle of exploitation and insecurity.

The devastating impact of HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases also propels the cycle of global insecurity. Jamaica is cognizant of the considerable investment that the United Nations and the international community have made in the fight against HIV/AIDS. That support has allowed developing countries, including Jamaica, to make a difference in the lives of those affected. Nevertheless, inadequate human and financial resources constrain our ability to scale up testing and treatment, as well as to implement programmes for increasing awareness and reducing the risk of new infections.

The developing world and lower-income populations are hardest hit by the impact of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The high social and developmental costs of NCDs demand concerted policy action at the national and international levels. We must implement the outcomes of the High-level Meeting on NCDs held last year.

We are on the threshold of 2015, the target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The results thus far have been uneven. We need to reinvigorate Millennium Development Goal 8, the Global Partnership for Development. I wish to underscore the situation associated with our middle-income country status. Country categorizations should not serve as obstacles to delivering support to the world's poorest and most vulnerable. We urge that middle-income countries not be pushed to the margins of the development agenda, nor be put on the fringe of the development assistance provided by the international community. A review of the factors used by the relevant multilateral agencies in measuring a country's wealth is urgently needed. We are supportive of the proposals put forward by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for an alternative but complementary approach to the criterion of per capita income in the allocation of financing for development.

I now turn to global political developments. The cycle of insecurity transcends borders. Recent events have called attention to the fragility of peace and security in many parts of the globe, and underscore the importance of respect for the rule of law, democracy and good governance. Jamaica reiterates its adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter, multilateralism and the inviolability of diplomatic institutions in the conduct of relations among States. We will continue to add our voice to the ongoing work at the United Nations to secure human rights, justice, social equity and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Transnational crime, narco-trafficking and the illicit trade in small arms and ammunition are major components of the cycle of insecurity. They continue to endanger lives, undermine the rule of law and fuel violent crime. We remain resolute in our call for encouraging partnerships in fighting this scourge, and will continue to work with all delegations to achieve a comprehensive and robust arms trade treaty.

The conflict in Syria poses a real threat to international peace and security. We are deeply concerned at the escalating internal violence and the resulting loss of life. It is our conviction that this conflict can still be resolved through political and diplomatic means.

We continue to urge the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume negotiations as early as possible, based on the two-State solution and relevant United Nations resolutions. Those resolutions address Israel's right to exist within secure borders, as well as the aspirations of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood.

We must ensure that the United Nations remains relevant to its membership through a process of reform of its organs, including the Security Council. Negotiations should proceed urgently towards a satisfactory conclusion.

More than two years after the devastating earthquake, Haiti's plight remains deeply troubling. We are concerned that only a disappointing fraction of the pledges made have been disbursed, and yet the humanitarian situation in Haiti is perilous. As a close friend and neighbour of Haiti, with strong historical ties, I encourage members of the international community to make good on their commitments. The Haitian people need our continued support.

The long-standing trade and economic embargo against Cuba, another close neighbour and friend of Jamaica, has had severe negative effects on its growth and development. Jamaica reiterates its call for an end to the embargo against Cuba and the extraterritorial measures aimed at extending its reach to include third countries.

Jamaica continues to work with our partners to erect a memorial at the United Nations to honour the victims of slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. We are grateful for the generous contributions received to date to erect the permanent memorial, and reiterate the call for continued financial support.

Fifty years ago, upon gaining our independence, Jamaica committed itself to the aims of the United Nations and fully accepted the responsibilities of membership. Our national pledge commits each and every Jamaican to stand up for justice, brotherhood and peace and to play our part in advancing the welfare of the whole human race. We will not resile from that commitment.

Let us work together to end the cycle of global insecurity. Let us provide an opportunity for every man, woman and child to fulfil their God-given potential. I leave members with the words of Robert Nesta "Bob" Marley, who sang: "One love, one heart". I hope that the peoples of the world will one day live together in peace, love, security, unity and prosperity.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Jamaica for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister of Jamaica and Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Jorge Carlos De Almeida Fonseca, President of the Republic of Cape Verde

The Acting President: (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. Jorge Carlos De Almeida Fonseca, President of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jorge Carlos De Almeida Fonseca, President of the Republic of Cape Verde, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fonseca (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I convey my greetings to the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, whom I congratulate on his election. I wish him success during his tenure as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would also like to convey my greetings to the former President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar, for the excellent work he accomplished during his tenure.

Also allow me to express my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his competent management of the Organization. We reaffirm our trust in his leadership during a particularly difficult time in our history — during one of the worst financial crises that the world has ever known that has had repercussions in the economic, social, political, food, energy and environmental sectors, to say nothing of the terrible threats to peace and security emanating from every corner of the world.

As a small island State, with a shortage of resources and with only 37 years of independence, Cape Verde is proud to be a democratic country that is based on the rule of law, built with the suffering and the determination of Cape Verdeans inside and outside our country. Notwithstanding the fact that my country faces enormous difficulties in ensuring its own existence and that to overcome them will require international solidarity, I believe that Cape Verde can, although modestly, contribute towards finding solutions to important problems that threaten the troubled world of our time.

Apart from the political stability that has characterized us as well as the build-up and consolidation of a democratic system, the Cape Verdean nation that preceded the creation of the State can be considered an example of peaceful coexistence among peoples who originated from different countries, with different creeds integrated into what had already been a mixed sculture. Our nation stands open to the world and to the exchange of values.

Cape Verde has opted for a policy for peace, dialogue and understanding in the resolution of conflicts. The expression of those values is part of the Cape Verdean people's way of living and being. Ours is a culture of tolerance that has shaped, in the almost four decades of its history, the values and principles of the country's policies. Besides our modest political contribution to the resolution of conflicts in Southern Africa, for example, the end of apartheid in South Africa, the independence of Namibia and peace in Angola, I would assert that our biggest contribution has been our way of life as a people and as a culture. Through our way of life, we have been able to show that tolerance and the sharing of values can be part of daily living, even in adverse conditions. Our way of life has allowed successive Cape Verdean Governments and heads of State to manage the foreign policy of our country in a consistent manner, giving priority to peace, justice and the peaceful coexistence of people in the formulation of policy. Accordingly, our foreign policy is the expression or translation of our culture and our ideology. That is also what guides me as I strive to broaden Cape Verde's contribution to our continent and, hopefully, to the world.

On 25 September, we celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Cape Verde, which is proof of the stability we enjoy in our country. It has allowed numerous presidential, legislative and municipal elections to take place, and changes in power have occurred with the highest degree of normality. By happy coincidence, that critical date for Cape Verde — 25 September — coincides with the launch of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, that exponent of democracy on a global level which is undergoing a process of revitalization. As such, I am very grateful to be able to share our milestone with General Assembly.

The Magna Law stipulates that our domestic legal order incorporates the precedents and standards of international common law and the law of treaties as lawfully approved and ratified. It is thus clear that we attach great importance to institutions like the United Nations and the principles that guide them. Nevertheless, we are aware that if those principles, which we have embedded in our Constitution, including those referring to human rights, do not trickle down into our day-to-day culture, the Constitution will not be fulfilled in its entirety. We therefore urge all Cape Verdeans, be they in the country or outside, to further internalize the values of our Constitution, which we consider a critical step in ensuring its vitality and full realization.

Despite the serious issues arising in the world and the vulnerabilities of the Cape Verdean economy and its direct impact on the living conditions of the majority of its people, I must say without false modesty that I am proud of the trajectory that my country has followed since its independence. At independence, our annual gross domestic product (GDP) was $190 per capita, whereas today it has grown to $3,295 per capita per annum. Several social indices have mirrored that growth, making it possible for us to achieve some of the Millennium Development Goals. In fact, the human development, economic and financial results registered in the biennium 2011-2012 received positive reviews from the major international financial institutions.

Ours is a service economy — with services accounting for 80 per cent of GDP in 2010 — with a very small market and an agricultural sector that is struggling with desertification and drought. We therefore cannot ignore our great vulnerabilities or rest on our laurels for having graduated to a medium-income developed country. On the contrary, we cannot lose sight of the fact that our economy is still very dependent, that it cannot employ a significant portion of its potential workforce, with all the social consequences that stem from that. We are therefore obliged to continue to rely on international solidarity.

We of course will continue to use our meagre resources in an efficient and rational manner and develop even more effective efforts to combat poverty, social exclusion and unemployment, which in 2010 reached an overall rate of 21 per cent, and 50 per cent among youth. Constraints with respect to energy, water and sanitation continue to garner our full attention so that, as we build key infrastructure, we can create the conditions needed to achieve sustainable growth in our economy.

We also must take into account the fact that the impact on small island developing States of climate change and natural disasters is a sword of Damocles threatening our future. It is imperative that all countries, acting consistently and with solidarity, implement environmental defence programmes, develop the green economy and help build true global resilience.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of today's world is the increasing interdependence of all sectors. We may speak frequently of the economy, but that is because it conditions all the rest — the environmental, health, security, political and cultural sectors, indeed, nearly all areas of human activity. It is therefore fundamental for us to constantly monitor all relevant aspects of those complex relationships so that we can understand the leading trends that have an impact on our process of development, but also so that we can contribute even modestly to solving the problems of people and countries across the globe.

Although social and political stability are essential aspects of our society, we cannot ignore the fact that on our continent, Africa, that has not been a basic characteristic for internal and, to some extent, external reasons.

I express my deep concern about the economic and financial global crisis that continues to severely punish the Governments and defenceless populations of the African continent. Those people are already suffering from hunger, the scourge of AIDS, the consequences of other endemic diseases, the flight of hundreds of thousands of displaced people and the overwhelming environmental degradation to which the continent is victim. Despite the fact that the continent least contributed to that imbalance, it is Africa that most suffers from its consequences.

Such crises also affect security not only because of regional conflicts but also owing to the universal dimension that terrorism has assumed. In that regard, it has affected a good part of our continent with its links to trafficking in drugs and persons, maritime piracy, religious intolerance and the problems that arise from the political, social or military instability prevailing in many of our countries. That is fertile territory for terrorism and its growth. The recent cases of Mali, Guinea-Bissau and others, such as the Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and some countries of the Maghreb, well illustrate the situation. The international community has every interest in resolutely focusing on the fight to eradicate such ills.

Despite those constraints, it should be acknowledged that the new wave of African leaders has been doing a great deal for the continent's progress. The international community must therefore help such countries to find appropriate solutions to the situations that they face, without interfering or acting in the interests of others rather than of our people.

In any case, an organization such as the United Nations, which is a depository of values that respect legality and international law, should never, through its silence, promote, further or support solutions that merely legitimize unconstitutional actions. It is clear that much remains to be done.

In our view, as I have said before, in Africa there has been no lack of mechanisms, declarations, recommendations, programmes and projects with assessments and perspectives that disregard the political, institutional, social and cultural elements and sometimes resemble a vicious cycle. There is no real development because there is no peace. Democracy is not deeply rooted because it conflicts with cultural and moral traditions. There is no peace on account of the intolerance and social exclusion that prevent its citizens from building a free, fair, democratic and pluralistic society. That, at times, exacerbates armed conflicts and other social ills.

Africa needs a new train of thought that does not reject the universal values of democracy but, on the contrary, uses them to enrich its own development process with a dialectic between modernity and tradition, freedom and the tendency for its own conditioning, the demands of its economic development and the fight against exclusion and social inequality, and reality and preconceptions.

Africa needs to regain its self-confidence. Africa still needs to see stronger links between the United Nations and the African Union for a true development partnership.

It is time to take decisions on issues such as global trade and climate change on the basis of global negotiations that are grounded in fair, equal and ethical rules and that are in step with the countries of the South, in general, and of my continent, in particular. That would give legitimacy to other forums, that is, in the context of the World Trade Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In short, we call for decisions on specific measures that will result in effective decision-taking within this Organization on development areas, such as cancelling the foreign debt of developing countries, in particular small island developing States. We are certain that that would be a stimulus for all such countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

In 2009, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon affirmed at Princeton University that the United Nations needed "a new vision, a new paradigm, a new multilateralism". That would help to ensure global economic and financial stability, combat poverty, re-establish peace, respond to the effects of climate change, improve global health, fight against terrorism and ensure disarmament and non-proliferation.

At the closing ceremony of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in June, it was stated that Rio+20 had shown that multilateralism was an irreplaceable instrument for the global expression of democracy. We reaffirm that that is the legitimate path for finding solutions to problems that affect all humankind. I support and welcome such statements.

In conclusion, the world has developed immensely since the end of the Cold War. The current multilateral system must align itself with the new challenges. For the United Nations to continue to be an efficient and vital instrument for the international community in this new era of multilateral relations, it will have to open up, innovate, listen to other voices and accept the new political, economic and social realities that have been created and imposed by the globalization process.

The President returned to the Chair.

The reform of the Security Council — an organ that is responding less and less every day to the challenges of the contemporary world — is a goal that has long been pursued, without success. Cape Verde supports the position of the African Union, which recommends that the Council be reformed so as to correct the unjust situation with respect to the African continent.

At present Africa does not have the right to even one permanent seat on the Council, even though it meets all the requirements.

I conclude, Mr. President, with the conviction that Africa can also provide a valuable contribution to the development of a better world, one without war, where peace is not just a theoretical concept; a world with more freedom, justice and security — in other words, a world with more fraternity and prosperity, in which the well-being of its citizens is effectively provided for.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Cape Verde for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jorge Carlos De Almeida Fonseca, President of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Abbas (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to begin by extending my appreciation to the heads of all the delegations who in their statements to the Assembly stressed the urgency of progress towards the realization of a just peace in our region, one which would allow the Palestinian people to enjoy their inalienable national rights.

Developments over the past year have confirmed what we have persistently drawn attention to and warned of: the catastrophic danger of racist settlers moving into our country. During the past months, attacks by terrorist militias of Israeli settlers have become a daily reality, with at least 535 attacks since the beginning of the year. We are facing relentless waves of attacks against our people, our mosques, our churches and monasteries, and our homes and schools. They are unleashing their venom against our trees, fields, crops and properties, and our people have become fixed targets for acts of killing and torture, with the complete collusion of the occupying forces and the Israeli Government.

The escalation of settler attacks should not surprise anyone, for it is the inherent byproduct of the continuation of the occupation and a Government policy that deliberately fosters the settlements and settlers and deems their satisfaction to be an absolute priority. And it is the inherent byproduct of the racist climate fuelled by a culture of incitement in Israeli curriculums and extremist declarations and fatwas, which are rife with hatred and are rooted in a series of discriminatory laws created and enacted over the years against the Palestinian people by the Israeli security apparatus and courts. Those entities provide excuse after excuse for the settlers' crimes and for their accelerated release should one of them happen to be arrested. Official and military commissions of inquiry fabricate justifications for soldiers who have committed what are clearly considered war crimes and have perpetrated acts of murder, torture and abuse of peaceful Palestinian civilians.

Over the past year, since the convening of the General Assembly's previous session, the occupying Power has persisted with its settlement campaign, focusing on Jerusalem and its environs. It is a campaign clearly and deliberately aimed at altering the city's historic character and the glorious image of the Holy City as etched in the minds of humankind. It is a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people of Jerusalem via the demolition of their homes and prevention of their reconstruction, the revocation of residency rights, the denial of basic services, especially with regard to the construction of schools, the closure of institutions and the impoverishment of Jerusalem's community via a siege behind walls and checkpoints. That chokes the City and prevents millions of Palestinians from freely accessing its mosques, churches, schools, hospitals and markets.

The occupying Power has also continued its construction and expansion of settlements in different areas throughout the West Bank and has continued its suffocating blockade, as well as raids and attacks against our people in the Gaza Strip, who to this day suffer from the disastrous impact of the destructive war of aggression committed against them a few years ago. Nearly 5,000 Palestinians remain captive as prisoners and detainees of conscious in Israel's jails. In that regard, we call upon the international community to compel the Government of Israel to respect the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and to investigate the conditions of detention of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, and we stress the need for their release. They are soldiers in their people's struggle for freedom, independence and peace.

At the same time, the occupying Power continues to tighten the siege and impose severe restrictions on movement, preventing the Palestinian Authority from implementing vital infrastructure projects and providing services to its citizens, who are also being prevented from cultivating their land and deprived of water for irrigation. The occupying Power is also obstructing the establishment of agricultural, industrial, tourism and housing projects by the Palestinian private sector in vast areas of the occupied Palestinian territory, which are classified as areas subject to the absolute control of the occupation, areas that encompasses approximately 60 per cent of the West Bank.

The occupying Power continues to deliberately demolish what the Palestinian Authority is building — projects funded by donor brethren and friends — and is destroying the Authority's building projects involving roads, simple homes for its citizens and agricultural facilities. In fact, over the past 12 months, the Israeli occupying forces demolished 510 Palestinian structures in those areas and displaced 770 Palestinians from their homes. Those measures have caused great damage to our economy and impeded our development programmes and private-sector activity. They compound the socioeconomic difficulties of our people under occupation, a fact confirmed by international financial institutions. Israel's overall policy is ultimately leading to the weakening of the Palestinian Authority, undermining its ability to carry out its functions and projects and to implement its obligations. This threatens to undermine its very existence or cause its collapse.

All of that is taking place in the context of an Israeli political discourse that does not hesitate to brandish aggressive, extremist positions. In many aspects and in their practical application on the ground, they incite religious conflict. That is something we firmly reject, based on our principles and convictions and due to our understanding of what it means to fuel such fires in this sensitive area, which is full of explosive flashpoints, and how that can fuel the action of extremists from various quarters, especially those trying to use tolerant, monotheistic religions as an ideological justification for their terrorism.

For our part, as proof of our seriousness and our sincere intention to create an opening in this impasse, we conducted exploratory talks with the Israeli Government at the beginning of the year, at the initiative of the brotherly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. We have also encouraged the expressed desires of several countries to contribute to efforts to break the cycle of deadlock and have ourselves undertaken initiatives to create favourable conditions for the resumption of negotiations. Unfortunately, however, the result of all those initiatives has been very negative.

There can be only one reading of the Israeli Government's actions and practices in our homeland and of the positions it has presented to us regarding the substance of a final status agreement to end the conflict and achieve peace: that the Israeli Government rejects the two-State solution.

The two-State solution — namely, the State of Palestine coexisting alongside the State of Israel — represents the spirit and essence of the historic compromise embodied in the Declaration of Principles, which was agreed to in Oslo and was signed, 19 years ago, by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel under the auspices of the United States of America and on the White House lawn. It is a compromise by which, for the sake of making peace, the Palestinian people accepted to establish their State on only 22 per cent of the territory of historic Palestine.

Recent years have actually witnessed a systematic acceleration and intensification of Israeli measures aimed at gutting the Oslo Accords of their meaning, while simultaneously building facts on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territory that are making the implementation of the Accords extremely difficult, if not completely impossible.

The Israeli Government aims to continue its occupation of East Jerusalem, to de facto annex large areas of the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory and to continue occupying a large portion of the territory under different designations. It refuses to engage in any serious discussion of the issue of the Palestinian refugees. It wants to continue its occupation of Palestinian aquafers and its control over the most fertile agricultural areas in our land, as well as over our air, skies,water, borders and our life in its entirety.

The final map and borders that can be drawn in accordance with Israel's official positions reveal to us small Palestinian enclaves surrounded by large Israeli settlement blocs and walls and checkpoints, and vast security zones and roads reserved for settlers. The enclaves would therefore remain subject to the full dominance of military and settler occupation, only packaged under new names, such as the unilateral plan for a so-called State with provisional borders. I repeat — a State with provisional borders. That is a project that we categorically reject from A to Z because it will not bring about peace.

Israel refuses to end the occupation and refuses to allow the Palestinian people to attain their freedom and independence. It rejects the establishment of the State of Palestine. Israel is promising the Palestinian people a new catastrophe — a new Naqba — a new setback.

I speak on behalf of an angry people who feel that while they demand their right to freedom, adopt a culture of peace and adhere to the principles and rules of international law and resolutions of international legitimacy, rewards continue to be illogically bestowed upon Israel, whose Government pursues a policy of war, occupation and settler occupation. Israel continues to be permitted to enjoy impunity, and some continue to obstruct the adoption of a decisive position regarding its violations of international law and covenants. That represents a licence for the occupation to continue its policy of dispossession and ethnic cleansing and encourages it to entrench its system of apartheid against the Palestinian people.

Despite our genuine feelings of anger, we — in the name of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people — will not allow our country to be divided in two.

We are the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. I reaffirm without hesitation that we are as committed — equally and by the same measures — to peace and international legitimacy and its covenants and resolutions as we are to upholding our inalienable national rights and aspirations. And we reaffirm that we are committed to non-violence and reject terrorism in all its forms, particularly State terrorism.

Despite our disappointment, we continue to sincerely extend a hand to the Israeli people to make peace. We realize that ultimately the two peoples must live and coexist, each in their respective State, in the Holy Land. Furthermore, we realize that progress towards making peace can be achieved through negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel.

Despite all the complexities of the prevailing reality and all the frustrations that abound, we say before the international community that there is still a chance — maybe the last — to save the two-State solution and to salvage peace. However, this urgent task must be pursued via a new approach.

Whoever rushes to advise us to repeat an experience that has proven to be futile, such as negotiations with the Israeli Government without clear terms of reference, must understand that this will result in the reproduction of failure and again provide cover for consecrating the occupation and will deal the final blow to an already dying peace process. Whoever advises us to wait must realize that the hotbeds of tension and the festering situation in our country and our region have their own timing and cannot withstand further procrastination and delay, nor are they amenable to being relegated to the bottom of the global agenda.

The approach required for salvaging the chance for peace must, first and foremost, be predicated on the understanding that the racist settler occupation must be condemned, punished and boycotted so that it is completely halted and eliminated. That approach also requires a reaffirmation of, and adherence to, the terms of reference and the foundations of the solution to the conflict, which have been endorsed by all here.

We do not need to belabour the core components of a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Rather, what is needed is the will to implement those components. Marathon negotiations are not required to define them, rather it is the genuine and sincere intention to reach peace that is needed. Those components are by no means a mysterious puzzle or intractable riddle; they are the clearest and best-known secrets in the world. They include, in brief, the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, over the entire territory occupied by Israel since 1967, and the realization of a just, agreed solution to the Palestine refugee issue, in accordance with resolution 194 (III), as prescribed in the Arab Peace Initiative.

The fundamental components of the solution to the conflict exist in the documents and resolutions of the United Nations. Member States already have them. The components of the solution are also endorsed in resolutions of regional organizations, beginning with the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Union. They can also be found in the statements of the European Union and the international Quartet. However, what is the use of all those terms of reference if Israel continues to refuse, and is encouraged by others to continue to oppose the terms of reference?

The international community, embodied in the United Nations, is required now more than ever to uphold its responsibilities. The Security Council is called upon to urgently adopt a resolution comprising the pillars and foundations for a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that would serve as a binding term of reference and guide for all if the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, is to survive and if peace is to prevail in the land of peace — the birthplace of Jesus, peace be upon him, the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and the final resting place of Abraham, peace be upon him — Palestine, the land of the three monotheistic religions.

All things considered, the establishment of a free and independent State of Palestine is a sacred right of the Palestinian people and an entitlement that must be realized, for it has been overdue for too many decades. It is not a grant to be bestowed upon us by anyone. It is a right, and the Palestinian people are entitled to that right.

At the same time, the Palestinian Authority has affirmed, through the implementation of its State institution-building programmes, the ability to create an advanced model for an effective, modern State through the development of the performance of its institutions and public finance management and through the adoption of standards for transparency, strict accountability and rules of good governance. Those achievements have been deemed by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to constitute an impressive undertaking and success story. Those achievements were again commended in the latest report just a few days ago, which confirmed the Palestinian Authority's total readiness for the transition to an independent State while at the same time stressing that the Israeli occupation remained the only obstacle to the realization of the State of Palestine.

During the previous session of the General Assembly, we submitted our application for consideration by the Security Council to allow the State of Palestine to assume its rightful place among the community of nations as a full Member of the United Nations. A major and hostile uproar was raised by some against that political, diplomatic, peaceful step par excellence aimed at saving the peace process by asserting its principles and foundation. Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the countries of the world supported, and continues to support, our application, our endeavour was aborted. I do not see even a single reason for opposing that request.

Yet when the countries of the world had the opportunity to declare their stance without any restrictions or veto during the previous autumn, they voted, despite enormous pressure, in strong support of the acceptance of Palestine as a member State of UNESCO. A year has passed, and Palestine, the homeland of Mahmoud Darwish and Edward Said, is playing its role in UNESCO with a high level of responsibility and professionalism. Palestine is committed to international conventions and is cooperating with all member States in order to advance the objectives of the organization and providing a model of what its positive, constructive contribution in international organizations would be. In order to enhance the chances for peace, we will continue our efforts to obtain full membership for Palestine at the United Nations. For the same reason, we have begun intensive consultations with various regional organizations and Member States aimed at the General Assembly's adoption during this session of a draft resolution considering the State of Palestine as a non-member State of the United Nations. We are confident that the vast majority of the countries of the world support our efforts to bolster the chances for a just peace. In our efforts we do not seek to delegitimize an existing State, that is, Israel; but rather to establish the State that must be realized, that is, Palestine. We are not trying to delegitimize them; they are trying to delegitimize us.

More than 64 years have passed since Al-Nakba and a large number of those who were its immediate victims and witnessed its horrors have died. They died with memories, preserved in their minds and hearts, of their beautiful world that was devastated, their warm homes that were demolished and their peaceful villages that were erased from existence, and of the renaissance that was undermined, and their loved ones, dear men, women and children, who were killed in wars, massacres, attacks, raids and incursions, and of their beautiful country that was a beacon of coexistence, tolerance, progress and a crossroads of civilization. They died displaced and in refugee camps to which they were expelled following their uprooting from their homeland, as they awaited the moment in which they would resume their suspended lives, complete their interrupted journey and repair their shattered dreams. They died while they clung to their legitimate human right to justice, freedom and redress for the historically unprecedented injustice inflicted upon them. Has the time not come to undo that injustice?

At present, 77 per cent of the Palestinian people are under the age of 35. Although they did not experience the horrors of Al-Nakba, they know very well all its horrendous details from the accounts of their parents and grandparents who endured it. They continue to suffer from its ongoing effects today and every day as a result of the practices of the occupation and of the settlers on a land that is diminishing in size. The horizon before them is closed to their simple, ordinary dreams. They see their homeland and their present and future vulnerable to continued usurpation and they say firmly: we shall not allow a new Al-Nakba to happen.

I say to the Assembly that the brave Palestinian people will not allow themselves to be the victims of a new Al-Nakba. We will not allow that. We will stay on our land. My people will continue their epic steadfastness and eternal survival journey in their beloved land, every inch of which carries evidence and landmarks affirming their roots and unique connection to the land throughout ancient history. There is no homeland for us except Palestine and there is no land for us but Palestine. We shall not accept an alternative homeland, nor an alternative land. Palestine is our homeland and shall remain our homeland.

Our people will continue to build the institutions of their State and strive to achieve national reconciliation to restore the unity of our nation, people and institutions via resorting to the ballot box, which will confirm our people's pluralistic democratic choice. Our people are also determined to continue peaceful popular resistance, consistent with international humanitarian law, against the occupation, against the settlements and for the sake of freedom, independence and peace.

Let us prevent the occurrence of a new Al-Nakba in the Holy Land. Let us support the realization of a free, independent State of Palestine now. Let peace be victorious before it is too late.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. Schaper (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Janez Janša, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Janez Janša, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Janez Janša, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Janša (Slovenia): At the outset, let me congratulate His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, on his election and wish him success in discharging his duties. It is my honour to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his able leadership and tireless efforts in guiding the United Nations in these demanding times.

The theme of this session of the General Assembly is "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". We had an opportunity to listen to the speakers at the opening of the session, who stressed the importance of preventing violence and the responsibility of all Member States, their leaders and international organizations to take any action they can to prevent and raise awareness of such horrible events.

Among other issues of global concern, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the horrific scenes in Syria. A civil war has been dragging on there for many months. Efforts at mediation unfortunately have failed. It shocks our conscience that we have been unable to stop the bloodshed. Sadly, we have not succeeded in protecting civilians. In my view, the situation is critical. It speaks to the urgent need to consider strengthening the preventive capacities of the United Nations, its States Members and regional organizations.

Concerted efforts to avert mass atrocities are needed. Last year we celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The Convention was the result of the tireless efforts of Mr. Raphael Lemkin, a Polish lawyer. He stalked the halls of the United Nations every day until December 1948, when the General Assembly finally adopted the Convention. Afterwards he continued his work, and his endeavours paid off in 1951, when the Convention came into force.

We then waited half a century to see the first conviction of an individual for the crime of genocide. The establishment of the International Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the 1990s was followed by the historic creation of the permanent International Criminal Court. That was another milestone in the humanization of international relations. A further encouraging development is that the United Nations system has improved its internal coordination of activities related to the prevention of genocide. The Offices of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities and the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect were established at that time. The Human Rights Council has helped to promote the culture of prevention.

Over the past months, the Syrian tragedy has increased awareness of our responsibility to prevent and stop mass atrocities. United States President Barack Obama has established a promising atrocities prevention board and, in his remarks at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in April, made the point that national sovereignty was never a licence to slaughter your people. I hope we all share his belief that preventing genocide is an achievable goal. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged in his speech at the opening of this session that we should give the responsibility to protect concept a tangible meaning.

To my regret, however, we have not yet achieved a common understanding on the modalities involved. We should therefore focus and strengthen our dialogue to that end. There is room for improving the modes of collaboration between the national, regional and international levels.

It will be recalled that after the Second World War more than 80 countries witnessed mass atrocities. At least 53 million innocent lives were lost. Behind those numbers were real men and women made of flesh and blood, and also children. They had futures but were not allowed to live. Behind those numbers there are still traumatized families and the distorted creative potential of the affected societies. Bearing that in mind, we should be able to set at least basic limits on human behaviour and stop mass atrocities.

I therefore urge the States Members of the United Nations, the members of the regional and subregional organizations and the United Nations system to develop a new strategy to prevent genocide and other mass atrocities. Moreover, an intergovernmental forum of like-minded countries should be formed to propose a United Nations resolution that would set a clear mandate for the preparation and adoption of an appropriate legal mechanism — a legal mechanism that would provide the responsibility to protect concept with new tools, a legal mechanism that would enforce crime prevention, a mechanism to facilitate a more rapid and effective response to acts of genocide and other mass atrocities.

Slovenia stands ready to start a dialogue to that end. We are going to convene the first meeting in the following months. I am glad that we have already enlisted substantial support for the initiative during this Assembly session. The initiative originates from international civil society. The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin has collected many thousands of supporters among international non-governmental organizations, lawyers, students, journalists and other individuals. Support is on the increase, and this is not just one isolated initiative. There are many others across the globe.

We should, of course, also enhance our collaboration with a view to the prosecution of alleged perpetrators of genocide and mass atrocities, including individual States. Effective prosecution undoubtedly has a deterrent effect and contributes substantially to a culture of prevention. Moreover, a genuine culture of prevention needs to be developed globally. We should improve our understanding of the warning signs, which should trigger early action.

These days we witness numerous acts of violence against diplomatic and consular missions in one part of our world. I strongly condemn such violent acts. They can never be justified. Freedom of speech is fundamental in a democracy, and a violent response has never been able to silence it. Only by strengthening intercultural dialogue can we diminish the potential for conflict. Only mutual respect can contribute to maintaining peace and security.

Mr. Prosor (Israel), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It was in 1946 that Raphael Lemkin asserted that our whole heritage is a product of the contributions of all nations. Each and every nation and the United Nations as a whole have an enormous responsibility, and also an opportunity, to prevent future atrocities. We cannot escape our history but let us learn from it.

I fully believe that we do not want the mistakes of yesterday to be repeated tomorrow. We took over the responsibility for the world from our fathers and have an enormous responsibility to make it a better place for our children. I therefore invite all here to do so by joining in our efforts for a world free from genocide.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Janez Janša, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Netanyahu (Israel): It is a pleasure to see the General Assembly presided over by the Ambassador from Israel, and it is good to see all of the representatives here.

Three thousand years ago, King David reigned over the Jewish State in our eternal capital, Jerusalem. I say that to all those who proclaim that the Jewish State has no roots in our region and that it will soon disappear. Throughout our history, the Jewish people have overcome all the tyrants who have sought our destruction. It is their ideologies that have been discarded by history. The people of Israel live on. We say in Hebrew, the Jewish State will live forever.

The Jewish people have lived in the land of Israel for thousands of years. Even after most of our people were exiled from it, Jews continued to live in the land of Israel throughout the ages. The masses of our people never gave up the dream of returning to our ancient homeland. Defying the laws of history, we did just that. We ingathered the exiles, restored our independence and rebuilt our national life. The Jewish people have come home. We will never be uprooted again.

Yesterday was Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year. Every year, for over three millennia, we have come together on this day of reflection and atonement. We take stock of our past. We pray for our future. We remember the sorrows of our persecution; we remember the great travails of our dispersion; we mourn the extermination of a third of our people, 6 million, in the Holocaust.

But at the end of Yom Kippur, we celebrate. We celebrate the rebirth of Israel. We celebrate the heroism of our young men and women who have defended our people with the indomitable courage of Joshua, David and the Maccabees of old. We celebrate the marvel of the flourishing modern Jewish State. In Israel we walk the same paths as those trodden by our patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But we blaze new trails in science, technology, medicine and agriculture. In Israel the past and the future find common ground.

Unfortunately, that is not the case in many other countries. For today, a great battle is being waged between the modern and the medieval. The forces of modernity seek a bright future in which the rights of all are protected, in which an ever-expanding digital library is available in the palm of every child, in which every life is sacred.

The forces of medievalism seek a world in which women and minorities are subjugated, in which knowledge is suppressed, in which not life but death is glorified. Those forces clash around the globe, but nowhere more starkly than in the Middle East. Israel stands proudly with the forces of modernity. We protect the rights of all our citizens, men and women, Jews and Arabs, Muslims and Christians — all are equal before the law.

Israel is also making the world a better place. Our scientists win Nobel Prizes. Our know-how is in every cell phone and computer that every one of us uses. We prevent hunger by irrigating arid lands in Africa and Asia. Recently, I was deeply moved when I visited Technion, one of our technological institutes in Haifa, and I saw a man paralysed from the waist down climb up a flight of stairs, quite easily, with the aid of an Israeli invention. And Israel's exceptional creativity is matched by our people's remarkable compassion. When disaster strikes anywhere in the world — in Haiti, Japan, India, Turkey, Indonesia and elsewhere — Israeli doctors are among the first on the scene, performing lifesaving surgeries.

In the past year, I lost both my father and my father-in-law. In the same hospital wards where they were treated, Israeli doctors were treating Palestinian Arabs. In fact, every year, thousands of Arabs from the Palestinian territories and Arabs from throughout the Middle East come to Israel to be treated in Israeli hospitals by Israeli doctors. I know that that is not going to be spoken by speakers at this podium, but it is the truth. It is important that the world be aware of that truth. It is because Israel cherishes life that Israel cherishes peace and seeks peace. We seek to preserve our historic ties and our historic peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. We seek to forge a durable peace with the Palestinians.

President Abbas just spoke here. I say to him and I say to the Assembly: we will not solve our conflict with libellous speeches at the United Nations. That is not the way to solve it. We will not solve our conflict with unilateral declarations of statehood. We have to sit together, negotiate together and reach a mutual compromise, in which a demilitarized Palestinian State recognizes the one and only Jewish State.

Israel wants to see a Middle East of progress and peace. We want to see the three great religions that sprang forth from our region — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — coexist in peace and in mutual respect.

Yet the medieval forces of radical Islam, which the world just saw storming American Embassies throughout the Middle East, oppose that. They seek supremacy over all Muslims. They are bent on world conquest. They want to destroy Israel, Europe, America. They want to extinguish freedom. They want to end the modern world.

Militant Islam has many branches, from the rulers of Iran with their Revolutionary Guards to Al-Qaida terrorists to the radical cells lurking in every part of the globe. But despite their differences, they are all rooted in the same bitter soil of intolerance. That intolerance is directed first at their fellow Muslims and then at Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, secular people, and anyone who does not submit to their unforgiving creed. They want to drag humankind back to an age of unquestioning dogma and unrelenting conflict.

I am sure of one thing. Ultimately, they will fail. Ultimately, light will penetrate the darkness. We have seen that happen before. Some 500 years ago, the printing press helped pry a cloistered Europe out of a dark age. Eventually, ignorance gave way to enlightenment. So too, a cloistered Middle East will eventually yield to the irresistible power of freedom and technology. When that happens, our region will be guided not by fanaticism and conspiracy but by reason and curiosity.

I think the relevant question is not whether this fanaticism will be defeated. It is how many lives will be lost before it is defeated. We have seen that happen before too. Some 70 years ago, the world saw another fanatic ideology bent on world conquest. It went down in flames, but not before it took millions of people with it. Those who opposed that fanaticism waited too long to act. In the end they triumphed, but at a horrific cost.

My friends, we cannot let that happen again. At stake is not merely the future of my own country. At stake is the future of the world. Nothing could imperil our common future more than the arming of Iran with nuclear weapons. To understand what the world would be like with a nuclear-armed Iran, just imagine the world with a nuclear-armed Al-Qaida. It makes little difference whether these lethal weapons are in the hands of the world's most dangerous terrorist regime or the world's most dangerous terrorist organization. They are both fired by the same hatred; they are both driven by the same lust for violence.

Just look at what the Iranian regime has done up until now, without nuclear weapons. In 2009, they brutally put down mass protests for democracy in their own country. Today, their henchmen are participating in the slaughter of tens of thousands of Syrian civilians, including thousands of children — directly participating in those murders. They abetted the killing of American soldiers in Iraq and continue to do so in Afghanistan. Before that, Iranian proxies killed hundreds of American troops in Beirut and in Saudi Arabia. They have turned Lebanon and Gaza into terror strongholds, embedding nearly 100,000 missiles and rockets in civilian areas. Thousands of such rockets and missiles have already been fired at Israeli communities by their terrorist proxies.

In the past year, they have spread their international terror networks to two dozen countries across five continents, from India and Thailand to Kenya and Bulgaria. They have even plotted to blow up a restaurant a few blocks from the White House in order to kill a diplomat. And of course, Iran's rulers repeatedly deny the Holocaust and call for Israel's destruction almost on a daily basis, as they did again this week from the United Nations.

So I ask, given this record of Iranian aggression without nuclear weapons, just imagine Iranian aggression with nuclear weapons. Imagine their long-range missiles tipped with nuclear warheads, their terror networks armed with atomic bombs. Who here would feel safe in the Middle East? Who would be safe in Europe? Who would be safe in America? Who would be safe anywhere?

There are those who believe that a nuclear-armed Iran can be deterred like the Soviet Union. That is a very dangerous assumption. Militant jihadists behave very differently from secular Marxists. There were no Soviet suicide bombers. Yet Iran produces hordes of them. Deterrence worked with the Soviets, because every time the Soviets faced a choice between their ideology and their survival, they chose their survival. But deterrence may not work with the Iranians once they get nuclear weapons.

A great scholar of the Middle East, Professor Bernard Lewis, put it best. He said that for the ayatollahs of Iran mutually assured destruction is not a deterrent, it is an inducement. Iran's apocalyptic leaders believe that a medieval holy man will reappear in the wake of a devastating holy war, thereby ensuring that their brand of radical Islam will rule the Earth. That is not just what they believe; it is what is actually guiding their policies and their actions. Just listen to Ayatollah Rafsanjani who said, "the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything, however it would only harm the Islamic world." Rafsanjani said: "It is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality". "Not irrational" is what he said. And that is coming from one of the so-called moderates of Iran.

Shockingly, some people have begun to peddle the absurd notion that a nuclear-armed Iran would actually stabilize the Middle East. That is like saying a nuclear-armed Al-Qaida would usher in an era of universal peace.

I have been speaking about the need to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons for over 15 years. I spoke about it in my first term in office as Prime Minister, and then I spoke about it when I left office. I spoke about it when it was fashionable, and I spoke about it when it was not fashionable.

I speak about it now because the hour is getting late, very late. I speak about it now because the Iranian nuclear calendar does not take time out for anyone or for anything. I speak about it now because when it comes to the survival of my country, it is not only my right to speak, it is my duty to speak. And I believe that it is the duty of every responsible leader who wants to preserve world peace.

For nearly a decade, the international community has tried to stop the Iranian nuclear programme with diplomacy. That has not worked. Iran uses diplomatic negotiations as a means to buy time to advance its nuclear programme. For over seven years, the international community has tried sanctions with Iran. Under the leadership of President Obama, the international community has passed some of the strongest sanctions to date.

I want to thank the Governments represented here that have joined in that effort. It has had an effect. Oil exports have been curbed and the Iranian economy has been hit hard. It has had an effect on the economy, but we must face the truth. Sanctions have not stopped Iran's nuclear programme either.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, during the last year alone, Iran doubled the number of centrifuges in its underground nuclear facility in Qom. At this late hour, there is only one way to peacefully prevent Iran from getting atomic bombs. That is by placing a clear red line on Iran's nuclear weapons programme.

Red lines do not lead to war. Red lines prevent war. Look at NATO's charter. It made clear that an attack on one member country would be considered an attack on all. NATO's red line helped keep the peace in Europe for nearly half a century. President Kennedy set a red line during the Cuban missile crisis. That red line also prevented war and helped preserve the peace for decades.

In fact, it is the failure to place red lines that has often invited aggression. If the Western Powers had drawn clear red lines during the 1930s, I believe they would have stopped Nazi aggression, and the Second World War might have been avoided. In 1990, if Saddam Hussein had been clearly told that his conquest of Kuwait would cross a red line, the first Gulf War might have been avoided.

Clear red lines have also worked with Iran. Earlier this year, Iran threatened to close the Straits of Hormuz. The United States drew a clear red line and Iran backed off. Now, red lines could be drawn in different parts of Iran's nuclear weapons programme, but to be credible, a red line must be drawn first and foremost in one vital part of their programme: on Iran's efforts to enrich uranium.

Now let me explain why. Basically, any bomb consists of explosive material and a mechanism to ignite it. The simplest example is gunpowder and a fuse — that is, you light the fuse and you set off the gunpowder. In the case of Iran's plans to build a nuclear weapon, the gunpowder is enriched uranium. The fuse is a nuclear detonator. For Iran, amassing enough enriched uranium is far more difficult than producing the nuclear fuse. For a country like Iran, it takes many years to enrich uranium for a bomb. That requires thousands of centrifuges spinning in tandem in very big industrial plants. Those Iranian plants are visible and they are still vulnerable.

In contrast, Iran could produce the nuclear detonator, the fuse, in a lot less time — maybe under a year, maybe only a few months. The detonator can be made in a small workshop the size of a classroom. It may be very difficult to find and target that workshop, especially in Iran. That is a country that is bigger than France, Germany, Italy and Britain combined. The same is true for the small facility in which they could assemble a warhead or a nuclear device that could be placed in a container ship. Chances are you will not find that facility either.

So in fact, the only way that you can credibly prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, is to prevent Iran from amassing enough enriched uranium for a bomb. So how much enriched uranium do you need for a bomb, and how close is Iran to getting it?

Let me show you. I brought a diagram for you. Here is the diagram. This is a bomb. This is a fuse.

In the case of Iran's nuclear plans to build a bomb, this bomb has to be filled with enough enriched uranium, and Iran has to go through three stages. In the first stage they have to enrich enough low-enriched uranium; in the second stage they have to enrich enough medium-enriched uranium. And in the third, and final, stage they have to enrich enough high-enriched uranium for the first bomb.

Where is Iran? Iran has completed the first stage. It took them many years, but they completed it, and they are 70 per cent of the way there. Now they are well into the second stage. By next spring, at most by next summer, at current enrichment rates, they will have finished the medium enrichment and moved on to the final stage. From there, it is only a few months, possibly a few weeks, before they get enough enriched uranium for the first bomb.

What I told the Assembly just now is not based on secret information. It is not based on military intelligence. It is based on public reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Anybody can read them. They are online.

So if these are the facts — and they are — where should a red line be drawn? A red line should be drawn right here, before Iran completes the second stage of nuclear enrichment necessary to make a bomb and before Iran gets to a point where it is a few months away or a few weeks away from amassing enough enriched uranium to make a nuclear weapon.

Each day, that point is getting closer. That is why I speak today with such a sense of urgency, and that is why everyone should have a sense of urgency.

There are some who claim that even if Iran completes the enrichment process, even if it crosses that red line that I just drew, our intelligence agencies will know when and where Iran will make the fuse, assemble the bomb and prepare the warhead. No one appreciates our intelligence agencies more than the Prime Minister of Israel. All these leading intelligence agencies are superb, including ours. They have foiled many attacks, they have saved many lives, but they are not foolproof. For over two years, our intelligence agencies did not know that Iran was building a huge nuclear enrichment plant under a mountain. Do we want to risk the security of the world on the assumption that we would find a small workshop in a country half the size of Europe in time?

The relevant question is not when Iran will get the bomb. The relevant question is at what stage can we no longer stop Iran from getting the bomb? The red line must be drawn on Iran's nuclear enrichment programme because these enrichment facilities are the only nuclear installations that we can definitely see and credibly target.

I believe that faced with a clear red line, Iran will back down. This will give more time for sanctions and diplomacy to convince Iran to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme altogether.

Two days ago, from this podium, President Obama reiterated that the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran cannot be contained (see A/67/PV.6). I very much appreciate the President's position, as does everyone in my country. We share the goal of stopping Iran's nuclear weapons programme. This goal unites the people of Israel. It unites Americans, Democrats and Republicans alike, and it is shared by important leaders throughout the world. What I have said today will help ensure that this common goal is achieved. Israel is in discussions with the United States over this issue, and I am confident that we can chart a path forward together.

The clash between modernity and medievalism need not be a clash between progress and tradition. The traditions of the Jewish people go back thousands of years. They are the source of our collective values and the foundations of our national strength. At the same time, the Jewish people have always looked towards the future. Throughout history, we have been at the forefront of efforts to expand liberty, promote equality and advance human rights. We champion those principles not in spite of our traditions but because of them. We heed the words of the Jewish prophets Isaiah, Amos and Jeremiah to treat all with dignity and compassion, to pursue justice and cherish life and to pray and strive for peace. Those are the timeless values of my people, and they are the Jewish people's greatest gift to humankind. Let us commit ourselves today to defending those values so that we can defend our freedoms and protect our common civilization.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Israel for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister, Head of Government and Minister of Defence, Police and National Security of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister and Head of Government, and Minister of Defence, Police and National Security of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister, Head of Government and Minister of Defence, Police and National Security of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Thabane (Lesotho): Allow me to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would like to assure him of my delegation's full support and cooperation during his tenure of office. His impeccable credentials and experience will ensure a successful session. I also wish to commend his predecessor for his sterling leadership during the previous session.

The establishment of the United Nations by 51 countries following the Second World War ushered in hope for collective security, shared prosperity and justice in international relations. Six decades have passed and the membership of the Organization has swelled more than threefold. But obstacles still remain in the path towards creating a world that was envisioned by our forebears. We know the solutions that can effectively address the multifaceted challenges that confront our world. But it is increasingly difficult to arrive at those solutions within the multilateral system.

On the international stage, unilateral actions that defy civility and international law are growing more frequent, and increasingly go unpunished. Despite the lessons of history, there are countries that still believe they can solve the political problems of our time through war and coercion. It does not matter to them that history has shown that the goal of domination through the use of force is not only elusive and dangerous but also unsustainable.

Humankind derives no comfort from the potential conflict between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Western Powers over Iran's nuclear programme. That looming crisis can be avoided not through the threats being made against Iran, but through negotiations based on respect for sovereign equality and the recognition of the rights and legitimate fears of all parties involved. Our generation is already facing too many problems. Surely we cannot afford another avoidable war.

We are saddened by the increasing tension in the East China Sea between two of the most respectable members of the international community, the People's Republic of China and Japan. No one should take advantage of the situation to fan the flames of discord between those two great nations and ancient civilizations. Instead, we must encourage them to resolve their differences with maturity and through peaceful dialogue.

In the Middle East, it is about time that individual interests gave way to compassion and reason, so that the people of Palestine can enjoy their inalienable right to self-determination in our lifetimes. Two States existing side by side in peace and security have long been recognized by the international community as the only plausible route to enduring peace and stability in the region. The State of Israel must be prevailed upon to support that solution. It must stop building illegal settlements on Palestinian lands, which have the potential to render the prospects of a two-State solution irrelevant.

Our call for lifting the economic embargo against the Republic of Cuba has gone unheeded for the past 20 years. Our thoughts are with the ordinary people of Cuba who for decades have been denied the fruits of globalization and prosperity through no fault of their own. This unfortunate situation has continued for too long and must be resolved. We call on all stakeholders involved to search for a just and peaceful solution, just as we continue to call on the Kingdom of Morocco to cooperate with the international community and facilitate the independence and self-determination of the people of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

Peace within and among nations is a fundamental condition for development. The dream of a prosperous world will continue to be an illusion if tensions persist and our world is perpetually at war with itself. That is why we welcome as timely and relevant the choice of theme for this session, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means".

Today, many nations are rising up against dictatorial regimes in defence of their basic human rights and freedoms. The popular democratic uprising in the Arab world has underscored the frustration of the people with longstanding political repression and lack of accountability. In some Arab countries this quest for freedom, human rights and democracy has been met with atrocious force and brutality. The Government of Syria must accept the popular legitimacy and supremacy of the people's aspirations before it is too late. Further militarization of the situation in Syria will make the conflict too costly in terms of human life. At the same time, we call on all countries to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Syria in a manner that undermines the prospects of peace in that country. True revolutions need no external sponsors. The efforts of the international community must focus on helping the Syrian people find a negotiated, peaceful and lasting settlement of the ongoing conflict in their country.

Africa, too, is trying hard to rid itself of wars and conflicts. While we thought we had dealt with the scourge of the coups d'état, it has recently reared its ugly head in a few African countries. We call on the international community to join hands with the African Union and stand firm in refusing to recognize any Government that comes to power through unconstitutional means. It is indeed a mockery of the United Nations, as an Organization that cherishes democratic values and principles, to accord legitimacy to unconstitutional regimes by allowing them to participate in its activities on an equal footing with bona fide Members. In Africa, we have adopted a policy of zero tolerance to unconstitutional changes of Government, and have remained steadfast in our resolve to refuse to recognize Governments that have no democratic legitimacy. We urge the international community to support that policy and to make it universal.

Africa has not been without successes in pursuing the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. The United Nations, the African Union and other stakeholders have worked together with the Somali authorities to pave the way for peace in Somalia. The positive results of that joint effort are beginning to be visible. Remarkable strides towards democracy and State-building have been registered. The election of the President less than two weeks ago is a cause for celebration. Today, the people of Somalia have reason to hope that they can put the unfortunate era of instability behind them. It is important to recognize, however, that the road ahead for the Government and the people of Somalia is still long and steep. The continued and unfaltering support of the international community is indespensable to ensuring that Somalia does not relapse into conflict and become a failed State.

The development and possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction remains a serious concern for the peace and security of humankind. Some States possess those weapons in large quantities and have not remained faithful to their commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Those States often threaten to humiliate non-nuclear-weapon States. That is why other countries aspire to acquire nuclear weapons. We must renew our collective commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world — a world that is safe for future generations, sustained by the shared values of universal peace and prosperity.

In the same way, for as long as international trade in small arms, light weapons and other conventional weapons remains unregulated, peace will continue to elude us. The failure of the international community, less than three months ago, to conclude a robust, legally binding arms trade treaty has left an indelible mark on our generation. We need to step up efforts during this sixty-seventh session and live up to our responsibilities. Conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, are the real weapons of mass destruction in Africa; they fuel conflict and account for the death of scores of our people every day.

Across the globe, military and political repression have combined with religious intolerance to sustain the spectre of terrorism that continues to besiege our world. While the international community must address those root causes, there can be no acceptable justification for terrorism, because it is both brutal and indiscriminate, and it is innocent people, including women and children, who bear the brunt of it. Lesotho condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It does not matter if it is sponsored by States or individuals, or whether its evil schemes are carried out by crude means or the most sophisticated weaponry. The recent murder of American diplomats in Libya demonstrates the brutality and senselessness of terrorism. It deserves our strongest condemnation. We extend our sincere condolences to the people and Government of the United States of America.

A few days ago, we had an opportunity to reaffirm our resolve to uphold the rule of law both at the national and international levels. Respect for the rule of law is a precondition for guaranteeing fundamental freedoms and respect for human rights. Similarly, strengthening the rule of law at the international level is critical for effectively addressing our current global challenges. International law is the very foundation of peaceful coexistence between nations.

The role played by the International Court of Justice as an instrument for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the bedrock of the international legal order is sacrosanct. Lesotho reaffirms its support for the principal judicial organ of the United Nations and for other established international courts and tribunals. But those bodies must not be politicized, so that they can retain their integrity and fairness.

It is almost four years since the multiple global crises befell us, yet the prospects for economic recovery remain gloomy. Evidence of climate change is all around us. Extreme weather conditions, floods, drought, soil degradation and the rise of sea levels threaten the very existence of humankind. In my country, drought and floods have heightened food insecurity, and famine is looming. In August, my Government had to declare Lesotho in a situation of food crisis and called on its development partners to assist. That followed a severe drought that afflicted Lesotho in the last planting season. I am humbled to repeat that call for help before this body. Our response to the crisis will focus on the priorities of subsidizing agricultural input and promoting drought-resistant crops, as well as scaling up conservation farming and providing nutrition services to mothers of infants and young children.

We went to Rio de Janeiro in June with a determination to adopt ambitious and measurable steps to address sustainable development. Regrettably, the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable

Development did not meet everyone's expectations. A lack of a concrete commitment by developed countries to provide developing countries with financing and technology is a source of concern. Nevertheless, there is still hope that a sustainable future is within reach. We must continue to work for the future we want and deserve.

As we march forward, we must ensure that the formulation of the sustainable development goals and their interphase with the post-2015 development agenda is done carefully and in an inclusive manner. We must avoid parallel tracks for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the sustainable development goals, which should be viewed as being complementary to, and not a substitute for, the MDGs.

The United Nations, which has remained the same for the past 67 years, cannot be effective in efficiently addressing the challenges of our time. The need for the early reform of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, was universally agreed by the international community at the World Summit in 2005. Yet, seven years later, negotiations on the reform of the Council are still without progress. As the status quo is maintained, the Council remains largely inept in the discharge of its mandate. Let us resolve to make the Assembly's sixty-seventh session one of action and less rhetoric.

Allow me to conclude by pointing out that a responsive, effective and efficient multilateral system is the only answer to the problems of the twenty-first century. It must be a United Nations that draws on the full diversity of its membership. With the necessary commitment and political will, that goal can indeed be attained.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Head of Government and Minister of Defence, Police and National Security of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister, Head of Government and Minister of Defence, Police and National Security of the Kingdom of Lestho, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 2.30 p.m.